

COBALT-SERIES

谷

瑞恵

伯爵と妖精

恋人は幽霊 ゴースト

集英社





伯爵と妖精
Earl and Fairy

CHARACTER

Edgar

Born into peerage, but sold off to an organization lead by Prince. After surviving that cruel fate, and with Lydia's help he gained the title of Earl. He plans revenge against Prince but also flirts with Lydia with unknown intentions.

Raven

Edgar's butler, a young man with an air of mystery. A deadly martial artist and very loyal to his master.

Lydia

A girl who can see & speak to fairies. After helping Edgar become Earl, she's now hired as his fairy doctor; furthermore, she agreed to a sham engagement with him to fool a fairy. She's now been kidnapped by someone and put under a spiritualist's spell....

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Chapter 1 - The Earl's Naughty Lie

At the middle of the night in the corner of the city, there was a trail of gentlemen who all entered the same building one by one, which was located off of the main street as quietly as they could, so they wouldn't call any attention, like they were avoiding any unwanted notice.

Watching that from the corner of her eye, she entered into the same building from the backdoor.

The place the men and she went into was the gathering place of the Association of the Spiritual and Psychic in the city of London. Tonight was the night when they were going to hold a ceremony to call down the spirits of the dead.

This association of the spiritual and psychic that was an organization which gathered to call down dead spirits and make mysterious occurrences happen and be able to talk directly with the spirits was recently the fashionable thing between the people who were interested in spiritual occurrences and activities. Tonight, she was invited as a spiritualist to one of those associations of like-minded people who researched those kinds of spiritual phenomena.

She was passing herself as a very-well known spiritualist in America. However, she knew most of all that she didn't have that kind of power, and never did anything near that of the practice of a spiritualist.

Though, all of the preparations were ready. She was going to need to act the part.

After she was guided into a waiting room, together with the old woman who accompanied her, she let out a sigh from all the nervous tension in her.

The brightness of the gas lamp made her in turn more nervous.

"Don't worry. You'll be able to do just fine, Seraphita."

The old woman spoke encouraging words to her, as she dimmed the lamp light for her.

In the next room, it seemed like the nobles that were invited had gathered. From beyond the door, she could faintly hear the noise of lowered voices

whispering and mumbling amongst each other.

The next room was where the spiritualism was going to take place, and so the gentlemen in that darkened room were sure to be wondering aimlessly about. As they were feeling fear, shame and curiosity in the ritual to call for the spirits of the dead.

In that group of people, there might be the man she knew. No, he was sure to be here.

She took the chance and courageously walked over to the door and opened the peeking window.

In the group of the dozen or so men, she was immediately able to spot him. Her heart beated rapidly.

Where ever he went, he stood out.

There were thick curtains covering every window-like opening in the room and although there was just the light from the one candle in the dark room, his brilliant golden-blond hair soaked up all the light there was and shined radiantly.

Even though he was just casually standing alone in the lingering crowd, the beautifully sculptured side of his face and his elegant impression emitted the aura of noble blue blood. He must come dressed in that old, worn-out evening coat so that he didn't stand out, but it was apparent that he was from a different class than the poor nobles who had gathered.

It was like that from the past. Even if he shared his meals and bed with the street boys in the deserted houses in the slums, he was called sir even if he didn't wish it or not.

The high-class English and etiquette of the upper-class that was soaked in him from the core and with his noble spirit of being born as a peer made him be able to walk amongst the leading members of the underground society.

If there wasn't someone who was trying to catch him, then he could have climbed up to rise out as the leader of the group of underground society boys.

His eyes scanned the inside of the room but his seemingly casual eyes didn't allow anything to hide or sneak out of his vision. If one was looked upon by those eyes, she thought that they would be under the impression like he would

be able to look through their mask and easily discover their identity.

If he were to notice, then she wondered what he would think.

“Lord Edgar.....”

The old woman heard Seraphita’s faint whisper and lifted her head up as if she had something to say, but in the end, she remained quiet.

Earl Edgar Ashenbert. That was his current name.

It seemed like he had become a famous figure in the London ton, and appeared to this spiritual ritual knowing that it was a trap.

However, it was unknown how much information he had grasped about them.

Seraphita had her eyes fixed on him, and watched as his eyes stopped when they met a middle-aged woman.

She sat in the corner of the room with her head facing down. The only woman in the ritual room was this Mrs. Collins.

The spiritual ritual that was going to be held tonight was prepared for her.

She was the wife of a wealthy man who had a number of cotton mills in Manchester. Her reason in coming to London was to find a marriage partner for her daughter.

It wasn’t unusually these days for the newly rich to put a handsome dowry on their daughters in order to find a husband who had the title of a peer. Mrs. Collins was one of those.

On the other hand, for the aristocrats who had peer titles who were having a difficult time continuing their peer lifestyle are starting to search for lower class daughters whose parents were profiting in their businesses.

However in Mrs. Collins’ case, the problem was that her daughter had already passed away.

In other words, the spiritual ritual tonight was a particularly bizarre gathering that was held to call back her daughter and then choose a bride groom from the number of poor aristocrats who were so desperate for money that they would marry a ghost.

However, of course, that young earl’s finance wasn’t in peril and he must have no intention of marrying a ghost.

But there could be that possibility, as he was a man who would court anyone as

long as it was a woman. He might have some interest even if it was a ghost. When she closed the peeking window and stepped away from the door, one of the spiritual association committee members whispered to the waiting room to start at any time.

It was almost midnight, the perfect time to perform a spirit calling ritual. She pulled down her black silk veil to hide her face.

“Let us go, Seraphita.”

The old woman stood in front of her and opened the door of the waiting room that lead to the spiritual ritual room where everyone was gathered.

At once, everyone’s eyes focused on her.

Slowly, she walked into the room and as she did, she flew her eyes around to look at the members in the room from under the veil.

In order to successfully perform the ritual, she needed to confirm who sat where.

However, as soon as her eyes came to him, she was captured by his sharp eyes. She had thought she was prepared and took caution, but she couldn’t take her eyes off of him for a while. Her face shouldn’t be able to be seen. And yet her heart beat raced and her fingers trembled.

Until she met him face-to-face, she had a feeling like she wanted him to notice her. However, suddenly, she feared being noticed.

She was sure to be seen with scorning, contempt eyes, but she had the desire of wanting to see him even if it was for just a bit, and she hated that part of herself.

She somehow managed to take her eyes off of him, and from there, she didn’t look towards his direction.



The platform of Victoria Station was filled with passengers and people who were seeing them off.

Peddlers with massive loads of luggage, families who were saying their farewells to loved ones, and dignified gentlemen and their ladies departing off to spend a small vacation trip.

In between all those people who had all kinds of different reasons and climbing

abroad the train, Lydia was nodding to the words of her father who was saying the same thing that he had been repeating for who knows how many times.

“Lydia, be careful by yourself while I’m gone.”

“Yes, father.”

Lydia’s father, a professor in mineralogy had been invited to take part in an academic conference that was going to be held in Paris. He was just going to be away from London for a mere two to three weeks, and yet, as he kept checking the time, he seemed like he didn’t want to part with Lydia.

“You don’t have to be so worried; haven’t I’ve been living by myself all this time in Scotland.”

“Over there we had familiar faces all over town and it was a peaceful place, wasn’t it? But London is dangerous.”

“We have a housekeeper and I’ll be working at the earl estate, so there’s nothing dangerous at all.”

“The earl...., oh, yes, the earl. I guess he could be reliable....”

But he is the most dangerous, she thought he mumbled to himself.

Lydia was a fairy doctor. She could see fairies and talk with them. The earl who hired her as his private fairy doctor, was Edgar Ashenbert, who had the title of Earl of Ibrazel (the fairy realm.)

Just as his name, the earl from the past generations all had an estate in the fairy world, and as they got along with the fairies, they were said to be acknowledged as a dignified figure amongst them.

Even now, the name of Blue Knight Earl that was associated from the family ancestors was the most renowned human name amongst the fairies.

However in the present times, not long after the earl family bloodline had died out, because Edgar, who had inherited only the title for various reasons, didn’t have the magical powers in order to communicate with fairies, he had hired Lydia.

Putting that aside, what Carlton was worrying about was the earl’s personality. The rumor about him being a philandering lady’s man was the absolute truth. He was sure to be worried to leave behind his only daughter who was of marriageable age.

"I'll be fine, Father. I'm not that slovenly of a daughter."

"Of course I know that. Oh, yes, I wanted to give you this before I depart," as Carlton said that, he took out a small box from inside his coat and handed it to Lydia.

"Your mother made him look after it before she passed away. After you grow old enough, she wanted you to have it when you turn to an age when you would start to think about marriage."

Lydia grew uneasy when she heard the word 'marriage' from her father.

Oh, no, he doesn't know, does he?

"I-I have no such plans."

"Your mother said that I should maybe hand it to you when you turn sixteen or seventeen. I thought it was too early for you, but you are working as a fairy doctor, so I really shouldn't treat you as a child forever."

It was just a month ago when Lydia was asked for her hand in marriage by a fairy and left the human realm. She immediately came back, but for Lydia who had the power to be able to communicate with fairies, she was not the ordinary daughter. As long as she dealt with fairies, who didn't understand the normal acceptable human practice, and was asked for his bride, then as her father, he wouldn't be allowed to give any time to give her his blessings.

Carlton was taught that and so he must have been mulling over until today and he thought he should finally hand over the item that his wife had trusted him with.

With mixed feelings, Lydia opened the box.

There was a pendant in it which dangled a clear gemstone with a faint blue hew.

"It's a gemstone called aquamarine."

"It's like....., the color of the ocean water."

"Your mother said that she was handed this down from her mother around your age. And her mother from her mother...., well, it's that kind of thing."

Lydia didn't know about the homeland of her mother who left her house as she had pretty much eloped with her father.

But when she heard the story he told her, it was strange as she felt a faint

nostalgia to the island she never say located in the far north.

“Thank you, Father. I’ll treasure it.”

“Well, then, I’ll be off now.”

“Take care.”

She kissed his cheek goodbye and watched her father climbed aboard the train. The steam train left London just as scheduled as it headed off towards the English Channel.

Inside the box along with the pendant, there was a letter from her mother.

[My dear Lydia, I wonder how you are when you are reading this letter. You said you wanted to become a fairy doctor like mother, so I wonder if that came true. A fairy doctor is quite a unique profession, so no one will lend you their hand. I worry that that doesn’t put you through any painful paths, but before you are a fairy doctor, please don’t forget that you are a young woman. Someone who stay by your side and support you will be your treasure.]

It was a short letter, but she was filled with happiness from her mother’s love.

Lydia wondered if her mother thought she was also in love with someone just like how her mother and father met.

Or perhaps, since it was an era when people didn’t believe in the existence of fairies, her mother might not have wanted her to be fixated on being a fairy doctor and desire happiness as a normal young woman.

“Maybe Mother thought I wasn’t suited in being a fairy doctor....”

That was a point that the inexperienced Lydia was also constantly feeling. But, once she started it, she wanted to become a fully fledged professional.

Fairy doctors, who were specialists in fairies, gave their advice to people who were troubled by the pranks and magic of fairies and their main job was to solve those troubles.

In turn, there were cases when they would help fairies who were being sustained by human troubles. And by obtaining the trust of the fairy clans like that, they would be able to make negotiations and exchanges with fairies in order to protect the interests of humans.

“That’s why I have no time to think about marriage,” spitted out Lydia aimed at no one as she looked up at the sky from the bench she was sitting on in the

park.

The sun shined bright high in the sky, beautifully coloring the short summer of England. The wooden bench was basking in the sunshine and surrounded by a sense of openness and yet felt cool and dry, letting her forget that she was the in the big city of London.

She had her hour of coming into work to the earl estate shifted to afternoon so that she could see off her father. She planned on spending her time and drew a deep breath.

Of course, Lydia had nothing to complain about of her work office at the earl estate which was so comfortable, but Lydia's love for the smell of the trees and musical sound of the wind was greater.

“Oi, Lydia, the newspaper published another article on that scoundrel. Two pages even. He sure is popular.”

She looked up to the source of the voice and saw there was a gray-haired cat sitting atop of a thick tree branch. It was Lydia's fairy partner. He had the form of a complete long-haired cat, but he walked up on his back legs and spoke like a human. Even now, he straightened his spine and sat perched on the branch.

Nico skillfully folded up the newspaper which was as long as him with his two hands and tossed it down to Lydia.

Again? Thought Lydia as she looked down to the paper.

Lydia's employer, Edgar Ashenbert was, at the moment, the star of the gossip in the tabloids.

The beautiful young earl. There were endless number of women who was rumored with him who was a smooth talker and a lady's man. He was so famous that there was no one who didn't know him in the fashionable society.

Coupled with the unique name of Earl of Ibrazel (the fairy world), there was an increasing number of interested individuals in the commoners class and there were reporters, who have never met the earl, who were scrambling to pick up and write his romantic relationships that had hardly any credibility.

But to Lydia, she thought every one of them was possible if it was Edgar.

The article this time read that the earl had dueled with a certain noble over a beautiful widow and inflicted a major injury to the other man. Another one was

about how he made advances to a female spiritualist who was invited by the City of London's Association of the Spritual and Psychic; both of which were stories that commoners would jump onto with interest.

"Those are fat lies."

There was a voice that spoke to her right by her.

Edgar looked down to Lydia from behind the bench and smiled at her.

Just when she saw that, he quickly came around to seat himself down next to Lydia and moved up right next to her as if they were cuddling lovers.

"Wh-what do you want?"

"I just wanted to see you. I thought you would be here."

His shining golden-blond hair and his elusive and mysterious ash mauve eyes were right in front of Lydia.

She nearly watched in awe at the smile that was well-aware of how handsomely sculptured he was, but she hurried to shake her head.

"It's nice to have a talk outside for once. If this was inside my house, you wouldn't pay me any attention and focus on your work, and we just got engaged, yet we're unable to spend any time as lovers."

Lydia made a strong fist with her hand that was placed on her lap and tried her best to talk in a calm tone.

"I have no intention of being engaged with you."

Getting herself into an engagement with Edgar was like falling into the trap he had set for her.

Nonetheless, thanks to that promise she was able to return from the fairy world so she couldn't carelessly state that out in a loud voice.

Taking advantage of that, since then, Edgar treats her like his fiancée as if he was trying to brainwash her and continued to woo her with sweet, courting lines.

"Lydia, why don't we go to the beach? England's summers are so short and we can have you take off from work and spend some quality time at the shore. Professor Carlton is going to be in Paris for some time, right?"

Go on a trip with him in Father's absence? That would surely cause unwanted misunderstandings.

“No thank you.”

“I adore that cold-hearted part of you, but at this sake, I think we should step away from our daily lives and foster our love together.”

Who and why and how is there ‘love’ between us, you skirt chaser!

As Lydia glared at him with piercing eyes, she drew a deep tired breath.

The reason he was so obsessive about his engagement with Lydia wasn’t because of love or affection. He was trying to keep her by his side because she had valuable use to him.

No matter how much sweet words he spoke to her, she couldn’t believe it was from his heart.

“Don’t you know how many lovers you have?”

“You shouldn’t trust what’s written in the gossip papers. Hey, Nico, don’t you think so too?”

Wanting another’s agreement, Edgar looked to the tree branch.

“Yeah, the gutter press papers are filled with lies, just like you are,” said Nico in a disgusted tone and vanished.

Edgar shrugged his shoulders and Lydia let out a sigh.

However, now they were alone.

Ohh, of course, she realized that Edgar brought up such a lame topic to Nico so that he could drive him away, but it was too late as he already had his hand on Lydia’s shoulder.

“Hey.....Edgar.....”

She was flinching at the possibility of an array of flirtatious words that might come falling on to her.

“Pardon me, Earl Ashenbert.”

The one who interrupted them was a balky man.

“And you are?” replied Edgar in an irritated tone as if to say don’t interrupt us.

“I was told by your butler that you might be here.”

The man apparently knew of Edgar and he turned out to be a police detective from the London Police Department. Lydia was filled with fear and nervousness, but Edgar didn’t change his insolent attitude.

“Are you familiar with a seamstress named Maggie Morris?”

It was about another woman again. But to have the police involved, this wasn't going to be pretty.

"I don't recall. Did something happen to that lady?"

"Her body was found floating in the Thames River. According to her seamstress coworkers, she went out saying that she was going to meet Earl Ashenbert, ...in other words you."

"That wouldn't be me. For some odd reason, there are insolent imposters who go by my name these days."

He faced and spoke towards Lydia like he was trying to persuade her that all of the countless number of articles about his relationship with women written in the gutter papers were the works of those kind of men.

"I see. Since the honeyed-over rumors about the magnificently handsome earl, the jewel of the fashionable society, the mysteriously dashing young noble from the fairy world are all reaching our ears, so it must be a handy name in deceiving women."

"Then I can relax that you've understood that I'm unrelated?"

"Maggie had, uh, apparently dreamed about marrying a rich, wealthy man and so conducted in a behavior like a noble's daughter like how they talked and carried themselves. It seemed she was lying around that she was born from a prominent family but her father had passed away and so on. Although in reality, both her parents are alive and her father is a drunkard. She was quite a beauty and it seemed like there were many men who believed she was indeed an unfortunate noble's daughter, but eventually the truth about her was found out and she was repeatedly jilted. But then, she was able to get acquainted with some noble and was so heated up that if he wanted her, she was willing to give up her family, and was so elated that she was bragging about your name to those around her. her claim that he was a blond and quite a young earl matches your profile, so my lord, do you still have no memory of such a young lady?"

"I don't know."

"Young daughters have a tendency to get absorbed in their dreams and wouldn't listen to their parent's warning and follow after an ill-intentional man. This isn't that rare of a story, but it would be quite unfortunate for her parents."

"I agree."

Oh, like you're the one to say that, thought Lydia to herself. He was a man himself who was trying to take out a daughter while her parent was absent.

"I would like to ask just in case, but where were you on the night of Friday?"

After a little thinking, Edgar replied:

"On a picnic in the outskirts of the city."

"At night?"

"Is that wrong?"

"Who were you with?"

He replied with a number of names, but for some reason, they were all male.

Lydia thought that there would be no such mussy and fussy picnic, and then dropped her eyes down to the tabloid that was left on the bench.

On the article about the duel, the name of the man that was inflicted with a massive injury happened to be one of the names that Edgar said.

Oh, no, is the picnic with males only actually the site of the duel?

"Hey, how dare you say this is a fat lie! You were in a relationship with the widow....."

Lydia's mouth was covered over again.

"Widow?"

"Nothing, just something between us. More importantly, if you can verify with those men, then you'll be able to know that there is no mistake that I was with them."

If the picnic at night was a gathering for a duel, then his opponent who was injured and his second and the witnesses would need to confirm that Edgar was at that place as well as keep a tight-lip about the illegal duel and claim it was a 'picnic.'

But to participate in a duel, how dangerous.

"Why did you do such a dangerous thing? What happens if you were killed. Is it something so important that you have to risk your life!"said Lydia, pushing away his hand.

"I thought I could win."

"Are you an idiot! You could have been the one who might have been injured!"

“So you’re worrying about me.”

W-why would, I, worry.

“I’m sorry, I promise never again to do something that would sadden you.”

He hummed the words with a soft and sweet voice. For a moment, her mind went blank, but Lydia snapped back to her senses and let out another cry.

“You don’t have to promise!”

“Was it that dangerous of a picnic?” asked the detective.

Oh, no, she finally realized her slip-up and shut her mouth.

“Yes, since a demon could have appeared.”

“Ohh, a demon. So it was a gathering with occult-maniacs.”

The detective must have grown tired in not wanting to spend any more of his time on the bizarre hobby of the upper-class and quickly finished his business.

“I understand, thank you for your cooperation.”

“If the offender was the one who used my name, please do catch him. I don’t want myself to be written up in the gossip papers and give the wrong impression to my fiancée.”

“Oh, so you had a fiancée?”

“This is her.”

Since he looked over to Lydia with melting eyes of love, she wasn’t able to say anything to retort immediately.

“Uh-huh, is that so. My blessings to you both.”

Along with those words, the detective was quick to leave and didn’t look at all like he believed her to be his fiancée.

So he thinks I’m not suited for him at all?

Well, one would think that of course.

Her rustic-brown hair was always set down, and she wasn’t that particularly attractive and she wasn’t a noble’s daughter who wore the latest fashionable dresses.

“.....Do you see that. Who ever sees me, doesn’t see me as your lover. Even if a reporter for the gossip papers was here, they wouldn’t put me in an article.”

“That’s because we don’t have enough amorous air between us. Because you

don't allow me to even kiss you."

Oh, this is bad, sensed Lydia and hurried to stand up. But Edgar took ahold of her arm.

"Wait. Let me properly explain."

"Wh-what?"

"About the widow."

When he brought that story once more, she started to become irritated.

No matter how much he spoke to her of things that would give a woman expectations, he was still just a frivolous man. She should have known that, but still it made her upset.

"I'm just a friend with her. She came to me with the worry that that man wouldn't break up with her, and so I went in between the two of them, but things didn't go well and it ended up like that."

"I thought your principle was that you don't become friends with women."

"However it was in the beginning, there are times when we end up as friends."

Which means, either way, the two of you were in a relationship!

"Anyways, don't include me with all of your countless female friends or lovers."

"I set it right and broke up with everyone."

"Huh?"

"Once we're engaged, that's the proper thing to do."

I thought I said we aren't engaged.

"Anyone would have an old love or two in their past. Are you going to be upset over something that's already over?"

He says past, but it hasn't been six months since he arrived in England and it's unimaginable how many lovers he really had than just one or two. It was too suspicious if he really did end them.

Lydia didn't know where she could possibly start in counterarguing with him.

"You are all I have."

That was impossible.

"How about the spiritualist? The dancer from Soho? The daughter from the family who owns a bank?"

"A fabricated story by the gossip papers."

“There’s no way to tell. Since you’re such a liar. You could say that you broke up with them, but you’re just thinking it’s safe as long as you’re not found out.”

Lydia was questioning him, and yet, he was beaming with a happy smile.

“.....What’s so funny.”

“Nothing, just that I thought our lover’s quarrel is coming along nicely.”

“L-lover’s quarrel?”

“This is nice; we’re like a couple in how I’m being pressured to answer if I was cheating or not.”

Lydia realized how she had been acting.

That’s right. It didn’t matter to her how many women this man was in a relationship with or if he still was in a relationship with them.

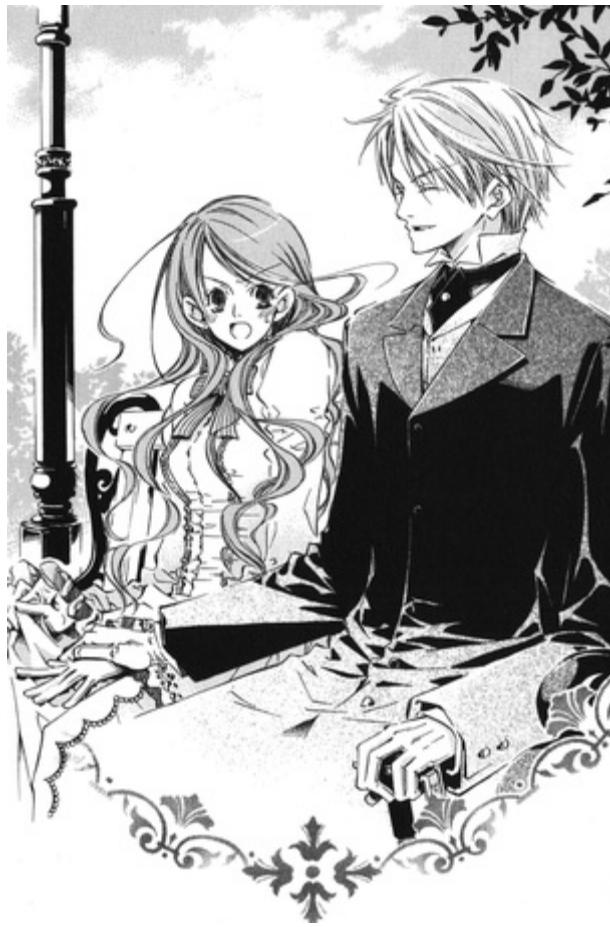
“I wa-wasn’t pressing you or anything. I wanted to, that’s right, it has nothing to do with me. You just wouldn’t drop the topic so I....Oh, my, goodness, I just wanted to say that I’m not going to believe in anything you say!”

She was speaking in an unnatural manner which put her in a deeper confusion all the more.

“You’re so adorable even when you’re angry.”

.....I wonder if I’m going to survive until Father gets home.

Suddenly feeling so tired, Lydia came to worry about herself.



In the members-only high-class club, which was the social gathering spot for the gentlemen, the night was filled with laughter and commotion as the men with leisure played throughout the night.

There was spirits and tobacco and opium. They were free to enjoy themselves in the comfortable, lavish room with games and gamble and even discussions with their friends. Out of all the pleasures in life, the only thing missing might be the women.

In club houses like these, normally women weren't allowed. The English fancied just gathering with men, which was incomprehensible to Edgar.

However, there was a necessity to come to this club tonight. After he was passed into one of the private rooms, the owner of the club Slade and the painter, Paul were waiting for him.

"And so my lord, how was the spiritual ritual last night?"

"Did you find out about anything on the spiritualist?"

With a quick greeting, they rushed into questioning him. The ones who brought the information about the spiritualist was these two, in other words, the secret organization 'Scarlet Moon' that were members of.

The two of them looked so serious that he wanted to play with them first.

“Yes, she was quite the beauty. She had her face covered with a veil, but I’m sure of it. Her figure was perfect as well.”

“Uh-huh..... That’s not what I meant, my lord, what on earth were you looking at. That woman might possibly be working under Prince....”

Slade was starting to get heated up from irritation and Paul was trying to calm him down by his side. Edgar was satisfied that he was able to anger the short-tempered man and so he got to the point.

“There’s no mistake that Prince is involved. As for them, I can guess they cleared their first step in their plan to lure me out.”

The one named Prince they were talking about was Edgar’s nemesis in America. The man had killed off his family and kidnapped him when he was still a child and made him his slave.

Although, Edgar was able to escape from Prince’s hands, he didn’t imagine that he would be allowed to continue on like this.

It wouldn’t be strange if they were going to launch some plan they set for him pretty soon.

He had every intention of taking up that challenge and even planned to destroy that organization along with that man eventually.

In order for that, he was proceeding with an investigation with the help of the ‘Scarlet Moon’ which was an organization that also held hatred for Prince.

And through that, they came up with the conviction that someone sent in from America by Prince was starting to work in London.

This someone at hand went with the name of Ulysses. This man had accepted a massive amount from a money lender who did business with Prince.

What ever he was planning on doing, it was sure to be money that he was going to use for his next plan.

The name Ulysses sounded familiar when Edgar was being under the capture of Prince. He never saw the man’s face but he anticipated he was one of the most looked-upon subordinates.

However, they weren’t able to get the exact whereabouts of Ulysses himself as he didn’t make an appearance anywhere. They had no information of what kind of person he was.

What they were finally able to find out was the existence of a spiritualist that Ulysses is being the patron of.

They didn't know yet what Prince's subordinate was going to start doing using the spiritualist.

However this spiritualist went around announcing that she was an acquaintance of Earl Ashenbert and made contact with members of the upper-class who loved the occult, so it seemed like they had the intention of luring out Edgar.

To that, Edgar purposefully made his appearance. Even if it was a trap, he wanted to make the point that he wasn't hiding in fear of Prince.

He thought that if there was a way for them to win without going as the enemy planned, then the first thing was not to be afraid of the enemy.

"I was told that it was to choose a bridegroom for the ghost daughter."

"Yes, she made her choice."

"What, so you met the ghost?"

"I didn't meet her, so to speak..., it's unclear. For now, there are four men, including myself that were chosen as candidates. They're going to call us back on another occasion. In the other three, there was a man who went with my name of Earl Ashenbert."

"Could he be Ulysses?"

"I'm not sure yet."

As he said that, Edgar remembered about the spiritual ritual.

With the invitation to the London city Association of the Spiritual and Psychic that the 'Scarlet Moon' obtained in his hand, Edgar attended the spiritual ritual using an alias of Viscount Middleworth.

The room he was led to had all of its windows covered with thick curtains and there was a large round table placed in the middle of it. The carpet that was laid out on the floor erased any kind of footsteps and so the room was severely quiet even though there was a number of people gathered in it.

In the dark, gloomy room that had only one lit candle, it was hard to decipher the faces of the invited gentlemen, but according to the report that was done beforehand, none of them were people who were acquainted with Edgar in the town.

The ton was a costly place. The nobles gathered here were ones who couldn't afford that.

After a while, the door in the back of the room opened and a small old woman came walking into the room.

「Gentlemen, thank you so much for your patience. We would like to start the ritual so please have a seat.」

Everyone did as she said quietly and after they all sat around the round table in a circle, a woman who wore a veil entered from the door that the old woman entered from.

The spiritualist wore a black dress and a black veil. Since her face was covered, her looks and age couldn't be guessed. Edgar thought by looking at the faint line of her face that she appeared to be on the slimmer side and quite young.

After she sat down on the only vacant chair, she slowly took a look at the faces that gathered in the room from under her veil.

It could have just been his imagination, but he felt like her eyes stopped to linger like a panic when they hit Edgar.

The spiritualist must have been unable to bear under Edgar's piercing glare and so never looked over to his direction after that.

「Is everyone ready. The one who we will be calling tonight is the daughter of Mrs. Collins here, the ghost of Miss Teresa Collins.」

The one who opened her mouth was the old woman who stood behind the spiritualist.

「Mrs. Collins had come to London in search of a powerful spiritualist.

There must have been some kind of work done from beyond in the spiritual world for our Seraphita here to come at such good timing to England.」

Seraphita, it was a name of a beautiful angel. He wondered if she was just going to have someone introduce her name and not reveal her face or let them hear her voice.

「Please forget your feelings of distrust and wish from the bottom of your hearts for Lady Teresa to appear.」

Seraphita lifted her hands to lay them on top of the table and took the hands of the men who sat on both sides of her. Everyone who sat around the circular

table all joined hands with one another.

The old woman stepped out of the room and then the only lit candle that was placed on the table blew out even though there wasn't any gust of wind at all.

At the same time, the room went instantly into pitch black.

For a while, there was silence. Just when the guests were starting to feel nervousness from the thought that this silence might last forever, they heard a faint voice that could barely be heard.

It was the low-toned voice of the spiritualist which had no intonation to it as she mumbled something that sounded like she was casting a spell.

As she spoke, from somewhere in the corner of the room, there was a sound like something creaking. As everyone was listening to it, there was a sudden loud banging noise like something pounding against the wall. The sound moved around throughout the room making periodical bangs against the wall, like it was trying to let people know that it was there.

The men on both sides of him fidgeted, like they were starting to get seriously afraid of what was going on.

Darkness took away one's self-possession and calmness. It wasn't impossible for someone to believe that what was happening right now was the work of a ghost.

Edgar was used to controlled and pressing down his feelings of nervousness and fear. This kind of darkness didn't even fall under a dangerous situation for him. That's why he was able to calmly think that there could be a possibility that the old woman could quietly come into the room.

Eventually, when the banging ended and it fell silent, they felt the presence of the rustling movement of someone's clothing like that person was walking right by them.

The spiritualist's whispers had ended. At that time, the one in the room was the presence that seemed like it was slowly walking around the room behind the men who sat in a circle.

If the souls of the dead had possessed their presence and breathing like this and if there was a possibility that they had come to this realm like this a number of times, then what meaning could there be in mourning their death at all.

As Edgar was thinking that, he was reminiscing about those he lost.

Her father and mother and his comrade and friends who fought along side him to escape from Prince.

Ermine, who confessed her betrayal to Edgar when they faced freedom right before them in their grasp and yet threw herself into the ocean.

Even now, when he periodically remembered her, he would fall into regret from the thought that he could have saved her.

She had went through more grueling cruelty much more than Edgar from Prince. Because of that, he wasn't able to realize that her soul was being under his control till the end.

If her real self, not an illusion, was able to have an actual presence here in the living world and come from the land of the dead like this....

Just then, Edgar's attention was immediately focused to what was happening.

Because the mysterious presence that had been circling around the table had stopped right behind him.

Ermine....

For some odd reason, he thought that. Without thinking about the ghost of Lady Teresa and the live person who a part of this trick at that time, he simply sat and felt the hand that touched his cheek.

Ermine, are you forgiving me?

When it came to the candle being lit again, of course there was no shadow or figure that was mingling around them and there was no sign that anyone had let go of the next person's hand, only the smell that was similar to jasmine floated about the air like it was the only trace of the ghost's appearance.

Mrs. Collins was crying in broken sobs. She must have completely believed that the presence just now was her daughter's.

The door in the back opened and the old woman appeared again to announce the end of the ritual.

「Was there anyone who felt the sign from Lady Teresa? We will have only those gentlemen come another day to meet her.」

Meet her? Are they saying that they were going to be able to see a ghost.

「What kind of sign?」someone asked.

「The sign of being chosen by her was being touched by her or hearing her voice.」

「Then it looks like I have qualified.」

Edgar lifted up his hand.

「May I have your name?」

「Viscount Middleworth.」

The old woman nodded and then another hand was raised from another seat. Out of those men, he heard someone introduce themselves as Earl Ashenbert and so Edgar slowly and quietly turned his head.

It was a young man who could be described as good-looking in his middle twenties. He had blond hair but that was the only characteristic that could be said he shared with Edgar.

The gentlemen all created a stir as they must have known the name at least of the Earl Ashenbert.

He thought he heard someone say that why would the lord of the earl house be here when he couldn't possibly have any financial issues.

I heard the rumor that he doesn't have any particulars when it comes to women...., was the next comment which meant they could have understood but kind of astounded at the same time.

Edgar thought to himself that he wasn't that destitute that he would go after a ghost.

「Then, later on, we would like to send out another invitation to those four,」said the old woman.

The spiritualist then stood up and bowed to everyone. She took the old woman's hand and just when she was about to head out into the room in the back, there was a light that seeped through the gas lamp from the door and shined through the spiritualist's veil and revealed the side of her face.

Edgar was instantly captivated by that sight.

Because, she looked exactly like Ermine.

He didn't think and ran over to grab ahold of the spiritualist's hand.

「Please do not, my lord.」

The old woman tried to get in-between them and Edgar paid her no heed and

continued to get close to the spiritualist.

「Miss Seraphita, was the one who touched me earlier really the ghost of the last Lady Teresa? Was it not these slim fingers of yours?」

He guided her hand up to his cheek, and confirmed that yes, it was indeed this touch.

The spiritualist's eyes met his through the veil and froze for an instant, but hurried to take back her hand as she silently left the room.

Ermine, or a woman that looked exactly like her.

If he used that kind of woman, then it was sure that Prince was laughing at him now that he was able to make a show of his power.

But, he couldn't allow himself to become emotional.

Edgar gulped down the gin that was brought to him by the server in order to calm himself down.

“You are able to get your hands on the names of the nobles who participated in the spiritual ritual from the spiritual association, aren't you? I'd like you to investigate about the other chose three men and the Collins family.”

“Then, my lord, what will you do? If they invite you, will you go to them again?”

“I will.”

“Then it may be best to have a guard or a contractor to go with you.”

“Raven will do fine. If I make the mistake and take those with me, then it'll be too much trouble to put my attention in safety.”

Slade made a vexed face, probably because the best troops of the ‘Scarlet Moon’ were said to get in his way.

There were members just in case who could handle weapons and those who would take up the chances of danger and work. In the beginning, this was an organization that started out as a decorative artist family who would secretly enter the castle of an important or leading figure and be sort of a spy.

However, for the time being, Edgar was only expecting investigating and collecting information from this organization.

And if he could, he didn't want any deaths to come out of the ‘Scarlet Moon.’

If it was Raven, he was the most trusted subordinates of Edgar. He was able to protect himself by himself. With that in calculation, he had the same strength of

bringing along several bodyguards so there wouldn't be any point of increasing the number of men in their group and making their movements any duller.

"I understand. We will do as you wish."



「Earl Ashenbert, his next lover is a ghost daughter」

A title that would make one frown was boldly printed on the cover of the tabloid papers again.

When Lydia commuted to the earl house, it was laid out on the table of her office. Lydia crumbled it up into a ball and threw it into the trash bin.

"Nico, don't make me look at the gossip papers everytime."

"I thought you would be curious."

Nico, who loved drinking tea, would always arrive at the earl house a little earlier than Lydia and had an expensive tea imported from Ceylon poured for him and was currently, enjoying his tea time with a satisfied look.

"I said that it has nothing to do with me!"

"Then don't get so angry every time. I'm just keeping my eye out on that earl to make sure to see if he isn't plotting some kind of scheme."

Keeping your eye on him, more like you just like to read about gossip. Even if Edgar was plotting something, Nico was easily bribed with food or wine. He was Lydia's partner but he was absolutely unreliable.

But then, Lydia just thought of something and walked over to Nico who was having his heart content in smelling the aroma of his tea as he gracefully held it up in his hand.

She cleared her breath before she asked him.

"So you read it?"

"Ah? Well, just skimmed through it."

"What did it say?"

"If you're curious, you read it."

".....It's not like I'm particularly that curious. Just only that, I have a lot of opportunities to be with Edgar. You don't know when and how we'll be seen under the wrong impression, so I thought I should just make sure and avoid any situations that could be used for a gossip article."

“Don’t you think you’ll be all right? Since you haven’t been used for an article even once all this time.”

Lydia felt a little irritated at being declared by Nico even that she and him didn’t look like a couple at all.

Well, it’s all right that we are seen like that.

She was just worried that she didn’t have any attractive appeal at all and that she might not be able to go through the normal experience of falling in love.

Yes, that was all, but it would be helpful to know just for reference.

Lydia carefully picked up the tabloid paper that she threw into the garbage bin.

She pressed out the crinkles and picked up the printed words. It wrote that the wife of a wealthy man held a spiritual ritual in order to find a marriage partner for her daughter who passed away. And it said that Earl Ashenbert had participated as a bridegroom candidate.

It said something about he had set his heart on the beautiful ghost.

“.....Unbelievable.”

She couldn’t help but gasped in horror.

She knew he didn’t hold any indiscrimination on women, but to go this far.

“Why, this is good timing, don’t you think. If he’s intending on marrying with a ghost then I’m sure he’ll let you go.”

“Yo-you’re right. I should have that verbally promised engagement called off immediately....”

As she said that, Lydia stopped herself in a hurry and shut her mouth, as she carefully looked over towards the window.

Because there could be a fairy nearby who she couldn’t let hear about calling off her engagement.

“If it’s that water horse kelpie, he isn’t in London.”

“What, did he return to Scotland?”

“Who knows, he might just be somewhere in the outskirts. He was complaining that London was too hot and smelled rotten.”

The engagement that was supposedly only to get through a certain dangerous situation was something that would void the engagement of Lydia with Kelpie.

That’s why, as long as Kelpie as near, she wasn’t able to go about declaring that

her engagement with Edgar was a lie.

However Kelpie wasn't here. Which means, she would be able to make it clear with Edgar and have him agree that he would annul their engagement.

"Hey, Lydia, where are you going? The earl is gone today."

"I have to devise up a measure on how I can cajole him into cancelling our engagement before he gets back."

"I don't think you'll be able to win against that glib talker."

That's why I need to come up with a plan.

Lydia left the earl estate and headed to the nearby park.

If she was going to have a deep thought, then being outside was more refreshing and it would calm her down.

Eventually the top of the park trees starting to poke out from beyond the gray buildings, but Lydia stopped in her tracks.

Because, she thought she heard someone calling out for help.

She listened carefully for its source. She heard it again amongst the congestion of the crowds of people.

Is it just the sound of the wind? No, it sounded more like the sounds of people talking, like the rumbling of the sea, or like waves....

To hear it like that, it must be the voice of a fairy more than a human.

Lydia followed the voice and entered into an alleyway as she searched for its presence. And when she stopped, it was because she found a woman hunched down like she was squatting in the shadow of a lamppost.

It was a plump middle-aged, finely-dressed woman.

Did this person have a connection with fairy voice? Now she could hear nothing.

"Uh, are you all right?"

The woman managed to lift her pale white face and nodded.

"It was a small anemia. I was just feeling a little light-headed."

She said that, but Lydia couldn't allow herself to leave.

"Where is your residence? If it's all right, I'll accompany you home."

And then, the woman looked at Lydia and crumbled her face like she was about to cry.

".....What a kind young lady you are. If my late daughter was still alive, she

would be around the same age as you.....”

Like she was reminiscing about her daughter, the woman took Lydia’s hand.

The woman was called Mrs. Collins and was staying at a high-class hotel that faced Hyde Park.

Lydia picked up a hackney and accompanied the lady to her hotel and was lead into the spacious floor that she was staying on.

It seems like she was quite the wealthy madam of the house. Even if it was just a room in a hotel, it was a magnificent waiting room.

A young maid who was apparently in charge of taking care of the woman had warmly welcomed Lydia, but when she tried to make her leave, she was offered tea and cakes and the like, and ended up staying.

“Oh, no, I should be going now.”

“But, uh, if we could just show you our thanks,”

“Oh, you don’t have to trouble yourselves with that,” said Lydia and tried to stand up, but the maid stood in front of the door as if to stop her and suddenly made a face like she was on the verge of tears as she squeezed her apron that she wore over her uniform.

“Miss Carlton, I would like to go out of my bounds and ask you of a favor. Would you be able to persuade my lady. I know it is out of my place to ask of such a thing to you who had just happened to show her lady your kindness, but, I don’t what else I could do.....”

It looked like she was desperate and driven under the pressure of necessity.

“What kind of problem is there?”

Lydia was the kind of girl who couldn’t refuse if she was asked for help. If she replied like that on a whim, she was putting herself in a position where she had to listen to the maid’s explanation.

“My lady had lost her young daughter over ten years ago. She is unable to forget about her young daughter, but recently she was starting to act strange, and had lost herself because of her love for her daughter. She is in complete belief that the young misses is going to come back and started to buy dresses and collect bridal accessories, and become to seriously think that she must find a marriage partner very soon.”

Now that she recalled, the lady of the house did say something about Lydia being near the same age as her daughter.

“This started since that spiritualist appeared.”

“Spiritualist?”

“Yes, this spiritualist claims that she would be able to revive her daughter. But, to do such a horrifying thing....why, that would be an act against God.”

“Yes, you’re exactly right.”

“At this rate, I’m scared that my lady’s mentality would continue to ail. My lady is currently seeing you and your kindness as the same as her daughter. That’s why, if it was you, then I thought that she might lend you her ear.”

The young girl covered in freckles seemed to care for the lady of the house from the bottom of her heart and deeply worried for her.

“Are you the only accompany for Mrs.Collins? Where is her family?”

She didn’t think that an outsider would be allowed to but herself in.

“Mr. Collins is busy with his work and the one who accompanied her on this trip was her nephew, but he is only sixteen and is too busy going about enjoying himself....”

She must have thought she couldn’t say anything bad about the lady’s relatives so she stopped talking any further about the nephew.

“Since I lost my parents when I was young, I had been taking care of my lady all this time. She had been kind enough to keep a lowly under-servant like myself by her side, and as I worked as a maid, she took time out of herself to teach me how to read and needlework so that I may find a proper family to marry off to....”

“So you wish for her to get better.”

She wiped her eyes as she nodded.

“I don’t mind if I just talk to her. But I don’t think that alone would convince your lady.”

Most likely the young maid wanted someone who would be on her side. Since she didn’t know what to do, that’s why she must have revealed this to Lydia who was the same age as her.

More than for the sake of her Lady, Lydia gave her consent for the maid’s sake.

“Th-thank you so much. Then, I’ll go check on how my lady is doing.”

She gave a bow like she was relieved from the bottom of her heart and quickly left the room with hurrying feet.

Lydia sat back down onto the sofa and touched her mother’s pendant that she wore under her clothing.

Mrs. Collins who lost her daughter; Lydia who lost her mother. If she could be of any help, then this meeting must be fated somehow.

Or could this be guided by a fairy?

She wondered what that voice was.

Just when she was remembering, someone opened the door without knocking and entered. When Lydia turned her head to look, it was a different maid from the one just now.

“Please help me,” she suddenly said as she looked like she was fearing something outside.

“Please help me, Fairy doctor.”

How could she possibly know that Lydia was a fairy doctor. And her voice sounded similar to the mysterious voice that Lydia had heard.

“Are you a fairy?”

“I’m a selkie.”

Selkies were seal fairies who could turn into a human by taking off their skin coats. But she had heard before that if their coats were hidden, they were unable to return to their true home of the sea and were left to serve the one who had hidden it.

However, it was the first time for Lydia to ever see one, so she couldn’t believe her so easily.

She didn’t look different from a human at all. Most fairies, even if they were in human form, had someone different about them, but since they were a fairy that were said to be the embodiment of the souls of humans who died at sea, so they must be much more similar to humans.

“Uh, then the girl just now is also?”

“She is not. We had our skin coats stolen by an evil human. I ask you, please, fairy doctor, please free us.”

So she's asking to help get her skin back.

She wondered what on earth was going on around Mrs. Collins for there to be a spiritualist and seal fairies around her.

Right in front of Lydia's eyes, as she was still confused, suddenly white flames burst out from the selkie maiden's whole body.

"Ahh..., my skin is being burned."

It was an illusion of a fire. For Lydia, it only appeared to her eyes and wasn't hot at all, but if the selkie maiden's skin was being burned, then it must mean that her soul was being burned to death.

"Where is it, your skin," asked Lydia as she stood up.

Her mind was filled with the thought of finding her skin coat to put out the fire.

"It is too late for me... It seems I was found out that I came to see you. Please hurry and escape from here. He is coming."

"What, but, I...."

"There is still many selkies who are enslaved. All of them are being put to work at a different residence. Their skin coats are sure to be hidden there by him.... Please..."

Her body suddenly turned transparent as it was enveloped in the white flames and then, vanished.

Oh, no, panicked Lydia and she scrambled to get out of the room, but she felt someone was behind her.

But there was no time before she could turn around as she was restrained from behind.

"Hey, what are you...."

She was made to smell some kind of chemical which made her mind dizzy and body numb.

"What a stupid selkie. To put her life at the risk and ask help from a fairy doctor. And what could a little chit like this do?"

From far off in the distance, she thought she heard a voice speak that.

"A fairy doctor of the Ashenbert earl family? I thought you were just a incompetent little chit so didn't pay you any mind. Now, what should I do with you?"

What do you mean incompetent.

I'm a perfectly able fairy doctor....

Chapter 2 - The Secret Art of Resurrection

The spiritualist looked like Ermine. It was through her veil, but Edgar was sure that she looked just like her.

Her body wasn't able to be found from the heavy and rapid waves of the merrow's sea.

Because of that, he couldn't throw away the faint hope that she might be alive somewhere.

But if she did survive, then why didn't she return to Edgar's side?

Could it be because she wasn't able to break away from Prince's chain?

If that spiritualist was Ermine, then that would mean she was still being used by one of the subordinates of Prince.

"Lord Edgar, I still can't think that my sister is alive."

Raven, who carried in the tea into the study where Edgar was deep in his thought, and said his opinion with the first step he came in as if he had been thinking about it all the way here.

"If you were to see her yourself, she was so alike that you would believe it yourself."

"Even if her face and voice was familiar, I have a feeling that it wouldn't be my sister."

Ermine was Raven's older step-sister from a different father. She different from Raven who was brown-skinned who was obviously from a different country and she was white-skinned but she was indeed his sister.

Edgar crossed his fingers atop of his desk and looked up to Raven.

"Why?"

"Even if she had survived, would you think that she would work for Prince again? She would have a reason to do that no longer and even if she were to be taken captive, I don't think she would value her life that she had once thrown away."

The reason she had been betraying Edgar and doing as Prince told her was

because of the sole wish that she could stay by Edgar's side.

During their escape, the only reason they were able to retain the strong bond between them that the only ones they could trust were themselves and those around them were all enemies, but once Edgar was able to get his hands on the peerage, then she had thought she would lose that special connection.

That's why she had leaked their information to Prince in order to prolong their escape.

No matter how long and how much they escaped, Edgar was always on the palm of Prince's grasp.

But that situation changed dramatically after he met Lydia. Because, it was impossible to get the peerage of an earl without Lydia's help.

And so then, Ermine brought Prince's control over Edgar to an end by the end of her own life.

Raven knew that Ermine, who had done such an act, wouldn't be able to return to Edgar's side, and couldn't think of any reason she would have to work under Prince once again.

"There is a way to confirm if it's Ermine or not."

As Edgar said that, he pushed the letter that just arrived over to the black-haired young man.

"It's the invitation from Mrs. Collins. I had treated her spiritualist as a fake and yet I wasn't taken off her invitation list."

Of course, the letter that was addressed to Viscount Middleworth had originally arrived to a different address.

"If I were to go to her estate near Hastings, then I'll be able to meet her daughter Teresa. It seems the spiritualist is also taking up her residence there."

"Will you go?"

"Of course."

"Understood."

As Raven replied in a composed manner, he held out a newspaper that had once been crumpled up with an expressionless face.

"This was on the floor in Miss Carlton's office."

It was the tabloids. On it was the idiotic gossip article that Earl Ashenbert was

head-over-hills about a ghost. Good grief, it wasn't Edgar who was calling himself as earl at that ritual and yet this.

But it was no mistake that Lydia had read it and that she was also the one to have an unpleasant feeling that made her crumple it up.

"....This is bad."

"It is bad."

As he slumped down, Edgar sank his fingers through his bangs.

"How on earth would Lydia get the opportunity to get her hands on a tabloid paper?"

In the first place, this was something that the working class would read and it wasn't something to read for someone like her from a middle-class family. He was aware that there were quite some things written about him, but since there wasn't going to be an opportunity for her to read it, he wasn't bothered by it, but it was sure specific.

"I believe that is because Mr. Nico is reading it everyday."

That feline.

"He acts like he's a gentleman, but he's a fan of a low-grade paper like this."

"It seems there are many fairies who like the idiotic gossips of humans."

".....Anyways, I'll go appease Lydia."

Just when Edgar stood up, the gossip-loving cat, who they were just talking about, came dashing into his study on his hind legs.

"Hey, Earl, Lydia hasn't come back since she went out."

He had a bad feeling. This was the time when Prince's subordinates were moving about.

"When did she leave?"

"Morning. She had supposedly gone off to the park saying that she was going to devise a plan, but the small fairies at that park said that Lydia had never come. I tried looking around in the area, but I couldn't find her, I'm worried, so could you search for her too."

"Devise a plan? For what?"

"Ahh, just for a little something."

Nico scratched his head trying to pass it by, but Edgar walked over to him. Nico

had his guard down and was immediately scooped up.

“Whoa, what are you doing, let me go!”

“What plan?”

When he stroked the area around his throat gently, Nico narrowed his eyes half-shut as he resisted.

“Stop, a-all-right, I-I’ll tell you, so stop!”

When he let him go, the fairy leaned up against the wall in a wobble and frantically combed down his fur coat.

“It feels so good, and yet you refuse, that disposition of yours really makes you end up with a bad deal.”

He glared at Edgar with a grudging look.

“I said to not treat me like a cat!”

“So, what was it that Lydia was thinking up.”

“The way to cancel her engagement with you!”

That’s bad, thought Edgar, as he crossed his arms.

“More importantly, hurry and search for Lydia!”

“Oh, of course. Raven, call for my butler.”



When she came to, she was sitting in a dark room that was only lit by one candle.

From behind the chair she was sitting on, there was a woman standing and had set her hands on her shoulders.

The reason she was able to guess that it was a woman was because she felt the hands to be slender and soft.

“My lady Teresa, how are you feeling?” someone asked her.

Teresa, could that be her name, she thought in confusion.

However, immediately, she began to think that it was so.

“You were just reborn right now. You have returned to your loving family once more in the world of the living.”

When she turned her head around just a bit, she finally was able to see the face of the woman behind her. She was a beautiful person with silky white skin.

But the one who was talking to her was the old woman beside her. The

beautiful woman just nodded to the old woman's words.

Reborn?

Now that she thought about it, she had the feeling like she was in another place that wasn't here. It wasn't this dark, a place that was bright and warm.

She had the lingering thought that being reborn wasn't that good of an experience.

She tried to lift up her right hand. The slender young woman's hand was smoothly covered in the candle light.

It was the hand of someone who didn't have to work. She had that dazed thought about it.

"Ohh, Teresa!"

There was a voice that erupted from the corner of the room that was cast in the shadows and a plump woman came dashing over to her like she couldn't bear to wait any longer.

"Finally, finally you came back to me. It's your mother dear, can you tell?"

The woman sat down and held onto her hand tightly.

Mother? Is that true?

She looked down at the woman who was looking back at her with tear-filled eyes and didn't know what to do.

".....Uh, I...."

She didn't know anything about herself so much that it even took her a while to realize that the voice that spoke was the one that came out of her.

"Mrs. Collins, it is difficult for a ghost to remember what happened in their life before their death. Please remind her gently and with plenty of patience," spoke the old woman once more.

The woman who was saying she was her mother nodded her head without any resistance. The necklace she wore that had a massive gemstone jingled around.

"My, mother....?"

"Yes, that's right, Teresa. Just say anything that you want."

It seemed like she was the daughter of a wealthy family.

"Anything?Even pretty dresses and jewelry?"

"You can choose anything you want out of the closet. If there isn't anything you

like, we can go buy something new. I have prepared dozens of accessories for you as well.”

What a kind mother. I’m so glad that I came back.

As she had that honest thought, she was hugged by her mother. During that time, she was able to see another figure in the shadows.

It seemed like it was a man, but he didn’t seem like he was going to come out into the light and remained silent without saying a word.

Of course, she couldn’t see the outline of his face as well as his expression, but when she felt like he had his eyes fixed on her, she suddenly felt like the reunion with her mother was ruined and nervousness prickled up her spine.

“Miss, are you awake? Hot water in the tub is ready for you.”

The young lively voice was different from the veteran housekeeper that her family hired, which forced Lydia to be dragged out of her deep sleep.

The room she was in was bright from the basking light from the morning sunlight that came pouring in from the window, and in one glance, Lydia saw that the room she was in was different from her own room that faced west onto the main room in London.

She hurried to sit up onto of the bed to see through the tall and wide glass window that there was the blue, sparkling ocean and wondered if she was still watching a dream.

No matter how she thought about it, this wasn’t London.

“.....Oh, yes, I was made to smell some chemical from somebody.....”

So, could that mean she was kidnapped?

If that was the case, she sure was treated with hospitality.

A large, spacious high-class room, with a fluffy bed and clean and white sheets. She was wearing a soft linen nightwear.

What is the meaning of this?

She remembered that a seal fairy, selkie appeared before her and asked for her help. Because she asked for help from Lydia, her coat was burned. In other words, she was killed right in front of Lydia’s eyes.

And the, Lydia was captured by the one who killed that selkie.

She was able to remember up till that part. But, where was she? Why was she

in a room like this?

She stood up as she was confused.

“My lady, I’ve brought your change of clothes.”

Lydia’s widened in disbelief at the maid who came into the room with clothing in one hand.

It was the maid that came crying to her asking her to convince Mrs. Collins. She was even more confused.

Was this girl in the same group as her kidnapper?

“Hey, you, do you think it is right to do this? I don’t know who the ringleader is, but kidnapping is a crime!”

When Lydia stood in front of her, the maid whose face was covered in freckles dropped the room wear cloths and they fell to the floor.

“What a horrible thing for you to do. Were you trying to deceive me by talking about your lady and what happened to you? What are you planning to do with me by taking me to a place like this?”

“.....Um, are you, perhaps, Miss Carlton?” she asked as she was flustered in dismay.

“Where is this? I’m going back to London.”

“You aren’t Miss Teresa?”

“What are you talking about?”

You’re not making any sense, mumbled Lydia as she tried to pass-by the maid and leave through the door.

Then the maid reacted in a hurry to stand in front of her and closed the door and then bowed down onto the floor in front of Lydia.

“I’m so sorry, please forgive me.I knew it was a terrifying thing to do, but there was nothing I could do to stop it..... But, I beg of you, please remain here for just a while longer. If you were to try to leave here, then you’ll be killed.”

Killed?! That sure didn’t sound pleasant.

And at how desperate the maid was, Lydia felt that she wasn’t the one at fault and so was able to calm down a bit.

“Then, would you be able to explain to me what all this is about? It’s not that I’m blaming you.”

She knelt down and took the girl's hand to calm her.

"What is your name?"

"Suzy....."

According to her explanation, right afterwards when she returned to the waiting room, she found Lydia was unconscious on the floor.

She rushed to call for help, and then the spiritualist appeared and told her to quickly leave the hotel.

The unconscious Lydia was put on a wheelchair and Suzy said that she helped carry her onto the train as she was filled with guilt.

In order to revive Mrs. Collins' daughter, Teresa, who, if alive, would be seventeen years old, the spiritualist said that they needed a young woman who was the same age and use her body as a container.

She knew that it was an unholy act, but the madam who was obsessed about her daughter that she really should be hospitalized could only obey to the instructions of the spiritualist. Suzy was told that if Lydia couldn't be used as a container, then they were only left to kill her, so she couldn't rebel.

And then, Lydia was carried to Mrs. Collins' estate that was located in a town that was near Hastings and was currently in the condition where the ghost of the daughter Teresa possessed her body.

At least last night, she was acting like the young Miss Teresa who was just revived, but Lydia remembered no such thing.

But the daughter Teresa didn't really know how she really was and so was just going along with the story as she was told that she was once dead but was reborn.

"That's why, for just a while, would you be able to pretend like you are the young Miss Teresa? Once the spiritualist Miss Seraphita leaves here, then there won't be any danger. So please if you could till then.... Those people seem like they have nothing against killing people....they are terrifying people."

She wondered if that Seraphita was the one who held the selkies captive. But, Miss? Lydia thought that the one who called her incompetent was a man.

Either way, there was someone in their close proximity that had the power and ability of a fairy doctor.

But, why would that person do that to selkies?

What Lydia was sure about was that she was going to have to be here for a while. That would mean that Suzy's idea wasn't a bad one.

If she was able to pretend to be Teresa, then she'll be able to walk around freely. So then, she'll be able to investigate about the spiritualist and the selkies. The estate that that female selkie was talking about must have been here.

As she thought that, Lydia was able to rumble up the courage and determination she needed.

She was asked for help by a fairy. She needed to do this, even by herself, in order for a fledgling like herself to become a fully-fledged fairy doctor.

Because a real fairy doctor was one only when they were relied for help by fairies.

"All right, Suzy. Then can I have you at least be one my side?"

"Yes, of course. I was told by my lady to take care of everything needed for her young daughter and I think I'll be able to give my hand so that the spiritualist won't become suspicious."

"Thank you."

"And one more thing, Miss Carlton, do not trust the other servants in this estate. Some of them were secretly talking with the spiritualist. My lady had left the management of this estate in someone else's hands, so I don't know what kind of people have entry into here."

Lydia remembered the female selkie telling her that her fellow selkies were being put to work as servants in a different estate. However, in the servants, there could be those connected with the spiritualist and so Lydia nodded as she decided that she needed to take precautions since she wasn't able to decipher whose side each servant was on.

Since the ghost of Teresa was said to not remember anything about herself, there wasn't going to be any problems if Lydia didn't know anything about the Collins family.

Right in front of Lydia's eyes, Mrs. Collins was looking at her with a wide, happy smile.

“Teresa, here is your favorite custard pie. Have as much as you want.”

There were many times when Mrs. Collins, who was mentally unstable to be asleep or look off in a daze probably due to her medicine. On that day, Lydia could only meet Mrs. Collins for tea only in the afternoon.

“Yes, thank you, Mother.”

And then, Mrs. Collins’ eyes watered up with tears.

“I can’t believe I’m here enjoying tea with you all grown up.... I’ve dreamed about this for so long.”

She took Lydia’s hands into hers and gripped them like she was trying to make sure this was real.

“I believed that you really weren’t dead. I always thought that you really were growing up in someone else’s good care and destiny would work to make us be able to meet each other as a real mother and daughter.”

Lydia’s heart pained as she felt like she was doing something deceitful.

“I wonder if the color of your hair came from grandmother. Your color was more near a faint brown when you were a child and yet it’s changed to a reddish-brown color now. Even the color of your eyes; were they a yellowish-green like this?”

It looked like she had already forgotten about the spiritualist. And yet, for some strange reason, Lydia wasn’t put in an unpleasant feeling.

Because she was able to feel the pure loving feelings of her as a mother who lived all this time thinking about her daughter.

To Lydia, who lost her mother at a young age, the lady’s reaction made Lydia think that this was how a mother was.

For those who met Lydia’s mother, they would all open up and say that Lydia didn’t look at all like her mother who had the pure blood of the northern people in her and had platinum blond hair and white skin and was a magnificently beautiful woman.

Mrs. Collins, who was plump and gave a friendly impression wasn’t anything similar to her mother that she could faintly remember. But Lydia felt like they shared the same sort of air about them.

A gentle and calming demeanor. That made you feel relaxed by being by their

side.

“Teresa, you’ve grown to be such a beautiful daughter.”

Once she was embraced and hugged tightly, her heart loosened up to the thought that she could allow herself to fawn on the lady’s kindness. She wasn’t a child anymore, but this could mean that there was a part of her that was longing for her mother.

If her mother was right in front of Lydia who was grown-up then would she hug Lydia and tell her that she’s grown up so beautifully.

Just like how Mrs. Collins, who lost her daughter, had earnestly longed to meet her daughter who turned to an adult, Lydia’s mother might have felt some sort of sadness in having no other option of leaving behind her young Lydia.

“I won’t let you have to bear with anymore loneliness. I’ll make sure that you’re the happiest daughter in the world.”

“Mother.....”

Lydia thought about her mother as her head was stroked like a little child.

“Ohh, I shouldn’t be the one crying. Oh, I know, Teresa, there’s a cameo pendant that I want you to have. I was planning on giving it to you when you turn to an age you could marry. Just wait a little while.”

When she turned to an age she could marry. Items like that which are passed down from mother and from grandmothers were bonds between mother and child that don’t disappear even if the daughter goes off to marriage.

Lydia thought about the aquamarine pendant but when she realized it, she was pained to realize that it was gone.

She might have dropped it or it could have been stolen.

She felt like she had lost her mother once again and that pained her.



“You’re Teresa?”

She fought against the tears that was welding up in her eyes and lifted her head to see that there was a young man around fifteen or sixteen years old standing in the doorway.

“And you are?”

“Oscar, your cousin. My school starts from fall and so I came along to my aunt’s trip in place of uncle who couldn’t leave Manchester because of work.”

His faint blond hair that was cut evenly around his neck, waved in adjacent to his movements. When he sat down near the table, he made a grin like a little prankster boy.

“But, I never imagined that I would really be able to meet Teresa. I still can’t believe that a ghost can be revived though.”

His height was the same as an adult, but his facial features looked like that of a young boy. He appeared friendly and quick to open to others but once he talked, he was a boy that talked like he was pushing people away.

“Do you think that I’m not Teresa?”

“How do you think?”

“.....I don’t remember anything.”

“There is the possibility that you’re just acting in order to get your hands on the family fortune. You say that you don’t remember anything, but for that, you sure remember the manners for tea.”

Her heart skipped a beat. She panicked if she had acted like her usual self too much.

This man claimed that he didn’t believe in ghosts, might not also believe in the spiritualist as well, but she was hooked on the part of how he acted like he was testing her. She wasn’t sure if he would join her side if she was to open up about being kidnapped.

More like if she was found out not to be Teresa, then they would think of her as a common con-artist.

During the time her caution over-won her and made her keep silent, Oscar said fine, then and stood up.

“Hey, do you have a lover?”

“Huh?”

“It’s fine to become the daughter of this family, but if you were to do that, then you’ll end up having to marry a different man.”

He grinned at her and walked off.

Lydia was remembering the article about how a wealthy married woman had called back the ghost of her deceased daughter and was looking for a marriage partner. Could that be about Mrs. Collins, she wondered. If that were so.

Edgar.....

If that article was true, then could there be the possibility that he would come here as one of the candidates?

Then she thought he might help her, but if Edgar was interested in the ghost daughter, then she became worried that he would actually end up going onto the side of the spiritualist.

She wondered how much of an extent did she not believe in Edgar.

Even if she couldn’t believe in the flirtatious advances he made towards her, she believed that he wasn’t the kind of person who would abandon her when she was in a dangerous situation.

But that was because he had use in Lydia’s ability as a fairy doctor.

She wondered if the girl named Lydia had any worth in being rescued to him. However, her hope about Edgar was destroyed in a matter of time. Because the man who called himself Earl Ashenbert and arrived to the estate in the evening was not Edgar.

Lydia was looking down from the window of Teresa's room over to the entrance porch and hunched her shoulders in disappointment when she saw the unfamiliar young man get out of his carriage.

I should have known that what's written in the tabloids are all lies. He must have used the famous name of Earl Ashenbert because it allowed him to get smoother access to the wealthy middle-class people who he wasn't acquainted with.

Lydia thought it was so stupid of her to be seriously thinking if it was safe for her to be honestly ask for help when Edgar arrived and then laid down on her back on the bed.

Clouds spread out to cover the sky and hid the faint light of the sun that was leaning over to the west.

Once the gray-colored sky started to soak up around the sky and ocean and this estate, Lydia was suddenly hit with a strong doze.



Hastings, which was a town that was located on the southern shore of England, was known as a popular ocean resort.

Taking a dip in the sea, which was popularized by the reason that it was good for one's health had already become established as one of the entertainments of the people of England, and during the summer times, all of the towns on the southern shores which had beautiful white sandy beaches were overflowing with tourists.

Mrs. Collins had her estate in a quiet place, located several miles away from the nearest town that had those kinds of beaches.

This estate was built on a place which only could be entered by going across a long, narrow road that stuck out to the ocean and located on an island-like piece of land that was at the end of the road. This island-like place was only connected to the mainland with just one road, but apparently this road would

disappear under the waves that rose up at high tide, so it could practically be called a separated island.

If one of Prince's subordinates was plotting something by staging it at an isolated, closed-off estate like this, then how knows what kind of danger was waiting for those who entered its grounds. However, Edgar was accompanied with Raven and was heading to that place.

Because, Lydia was supposedly there.

The Collins family husband and wife built that estate some time around the time their daughter was born. However, the two of them had not paid a visit to it ever since their daughter passed away.

Because, their daughter, who was just only five years old, had died in the ocean near that estate.

The only thing that was found by the shores washed up by the waves was their daughter's little shoe. Since her body could still be somewhere in the dark, depths of the ocean, the Collins husband and wife was still couldn't decide about selling the estate.

That was the information that the 'Scarlet Moon' had researched about the Collins family husband and wife.

Edgar was organizing the information that he had with him in his head as he sat in his carriage as it swayed him down the road for a little over an hour from the Hastings Station.

Nico told him that Lydia had disappeared, and after using all of his servants of the earl house to find her, they found a hackney driver that had picked up Lydia and a woman who was crouching in an alleyway.

He found out that the woman who Lydia helped out was Mrs. Collins at the hotel that they were driven to.

They had already checked out of the hotel and so he determined that Mrs. Collins had departed to Hastings along with the spiritualist, which made Edgar become overwhelmed with defeat of being out-done by his enemy.

There was no mistake that Lydia was taken by them.

But, he couldn't allow himself to continue to lose.

Making his silent resolve, he jumped onto the train that left first thing in the

morning.

When he looked outside from his carriage, he saw that the blue sea was so bright that it was reflecting the sunlight which didn't seem like England at all.

Beyond that sea was France. From the past, there were many people, things and wars that crossed the English Channel and came into England.

Truth of the matter was, Hastings was famous for being an ancient battleground.

In front of him, going up beyond the road that continued from the seashore, he could see an isolated island that rose abruptly from a flat plain. The long road that connected it to the mainland which disappeared at high tide stuck its narrow head out from the peaceful ocean waters.

It was a strange, peculiar shape of an island, and there was a brick-colored building that stood on the east-side of the island and by the time the entire shape of the lonely landscape appeared itself, the sky that was once clear and cloudless turned to be filled with clouds and seemed like there was a bit of rain on its way.

"Thank you so much for coming such a long way. Viscount Middleworth."

Mrs. Collins, who greeted Edgar when he arrived, looked completely different from how she appeared at the ritual and now smiled at him with beaming happiness.

"I've come at such a hurry. I hope that didn't trouble you at all."

"Of, it would never. And beside, my lord viscount, there was another guest that arrived just before you."

"Oh, my, who was it that was hastier than I?"

"It was the Lord Earl Ashenbert."

"Ahh, since he is rumored to be a lady's man."

Raven, who was just behind him, lowered his head as if he was trying to fight from bursting in laughter.

It's only just a silly rumor, softly defended Mrs. Collins. Edgar sensed that it looked like the fake earl had won her favor.

Well, sure he would. If a mother wanted to win her daughter the dignity of a

noble, than a famously, well-known peer in the ton was much better than someone who was poor and only had value in their name.

“Uh, there’s still time until dinner. Shall I escort you to your room? Or would you like to.....”

Her voice died out because she was hoping from Edgar that he could show his consideration to the previous arrival.

“If I could, I would like to pay my greetings to the earl.”

Once he said that, Mrs. Collins relaxed her expression in relief.

“I understand. He would be in the salon, so please follow me.”

It looks like she really didn’t want to displease him.

Of course, Edgar didn’t plan to show any consideration towards the imposter. He was planning to probe the man who claimed his name if he was working under Prince.

He needed to determine what their intention was and Lydia’s situation.

Lydia, he wondered if she was somewhere in this estate. He tried to think of a way to try to find her and safely get her out.

While he was thinking, he arrived to the salon.

Outside the windows, the sky was near dark and the evening rain showers were starting to come down, but in that room that was brighter than the ritual, Edgar finally was able to face the man who was his imposter.

“It is a pleasure to meet you. Oh, no, we had met at the ritual the other day, but since there was no opportunity to greet you at that time.”

Edgar made a pleasant smile and held out his hand, to which the man shook back in a generous manner which let Edgar see that he was able to put up the act of a proper noble.

“Yes, since those kinds of situations, it would be more polite to not exchange words.”

“By the way, my lord, it seems like we are rivals going after the same lady, but I would like to ask if you really do have the intention of marrying Lady Teresa?”

“I would have to say after I meet her. However, viscount, the two other candidates would appear much older to Lady Teresa’s eyes. So in practical sense, it would seem like it is a one-to-one competition between you and

myself.”

Edgar replied with an innocent smile.

“Please go easy on me. More importantly, Lord Ashenbert, is it all right for you to throw away all of your countless female acquaintances and go into marriage?”

The man made a smile that included a hint of sorrow. He was sort of making himself appear theatrical.

“Women are just all the same. I always think that no matter how many I court. That’s why I want to get to know a ghost. I thought it would be quite refreshing.”

That’s strange. Edgar was rumored to be a frivolous man who loved women but he never had that kind of thought or opinion before.

“The same? That’s unexpected. I imagined that since each and every one of them were so different was the reason you had fallen for all of them. How would you be turned on to flirt with them when it’s not even enjoyable for you?”

Could this man who couldn’t come up with a smart retort really be working under Prince? Edgar thought this man was not fit for the job enough if he were trying to provoke him knowing that the real one was right in front of his eyes. Could he just be a con-artist after the family’s money? Or was this also part of his plan.

“My lord, pardon me.”

Just then, Raven quietly stepped into the room and called for Edgar.

That was quite fast, I wonder if he was able to take care of it already. Edgar excused himself with the fake earl and left the room with Raven.

For Raven whose emotions didn’t appear clearly on his face, he appeared to have a stiff expression that made him nervous if it was bad news.

“I found Miss Carlton.”

“Is she all right?”

Raven thought about how to reply and said “I don’t know.”

“What do you mean?”

“I cannot decide. That’s why I thought Lord Edgar would be best to determine

that.”

The large room that connected to the courtyard was made into a gallery. There were a number of pieces of art bought from the East lined up in the exotic space, and the air in it even made the sound of the rain drops that were beginning to fall outside the glass doors even looked like a squall in one of the southern countries.

When he saw the brown-skinned Raven standing near one of the decorative plants that had its enormous leaves spread out, it made him feel like he had lost his way into one of the tropical southern countries.

The thing Raven was eyeing was the sculpture of a naked goddess that stood lit up by the lights of the lamps, and he saw there was someone standing behind it.

It looked like the person was trying to hide themselves, but the person’s dress skirt was hanging out from the sides and showing. Raven whispered into his ear. “Apparently, if you’re able to find and catch her, you win.”

“A game of hide-and-seek?”

When Edgar went over and approached the person, the figure in the dress turned around to run as if to escape from Edgar.

“You can’t catch me that easily, Mr. Crow.”

She chuckled playfully as she was about to dash off, but Raven stood in front of her.

She had knocked herself up against him, and looked up in surprise.

“Oh, my, Mr. Crow is over here?”

And then she glanced over towards Edgar.

“That’s not fair; you had one of your friends help you and tricked me.”

“Young lady, he is not a crow, but a raven.”

“Oh, yes, you’re right. And, then, who are you?”

The face that turned around to face him was lit up by the lamp light.

She had flowing caramel-colored hair, with mysterious golden-green eyes and a vivaciously spirited smile.

It was Lydia. Her body and face was Lydiano doubt. She didn’t appear hurt and looked in complete health, but there was indeed a problem.

"I am Viscount Middleworth."

For now, Edgar introduced himself by that name.

"You're one of the special guests that Mother was talking about."

".....Which means you are the young daughter of Mrs. Collins?"

"Yes, my name is Teresa. It is a pleasure to meet you."

The girl, who had the appearance of Lydia, lifted the sides of her skirts with her fingers and bobbed an awkward curtsy with a satisfied smile, like she thought she did it perfectly.

Teresa. She was the dead daughter who revived through a spell of resurrection. He inspected her hard and well to the point that it could be considered rude, but she didn't appear like she was bothered by a man's hard look at her. She came over to Edgar and looked back at him like she too was curious about him.

"My lord viscount, I have come back to life."

She even was aware about that part of herself.

"It seems so. The last time I had met you the other day, you were still a ghost."

"Oh, my, so we had met before? I'm sorry, I don't remember anything while I was a ghost or before I died."

Raven secretly asked him if she was possessed by a ghost.

It looks like that was the only believable state of this situation. Edgar nodded.

"Miss Teresa, how does it feel to return to life?"

"It's wonderful. I can't believe I was the daughter of a rich family like this. I have so many dresses and jewels. Plus, I'm going to become the wife of a noble!"

"So you love dresses and jewels and nobles."

"Yes, very much."

She was quite an easy-to-read young girl. Maybe because she was a ghost, or maybe because her personality was originally like this.

Putting that aside, he wondered if there wasn't any way that he could speak with Lydia. As he was trying to think of a way, there was a voice that was calling for Teresa.

"It looks like they are looking for me. I have to go."

Edgar blocked her path to try to keep her there.

"I would like to talk with you just a little while longer."

“But, to tell you the truth, I was told by my mother that I mustn’t meet with any of the guests yet. She will yell at me.”

“Let’s keep doing the hide-and-seek.”

He took the liberty and pulled her arm so that the both of them could squat down behind the Relief together.

Teresa must have thought this was exciting as she snickered under her breath.

“Quiet, they’re coming.”

The one who came along with their footsteps was a young maid whose face was covered in freckles. She was frantically calling for Teresa but Teresa herself was hiding as she was fighting against her laughter.

Raven went over to the maid and as he came up with the lie to her that no one was here, the two of them sneaked out of the gallery.

“You’re quite forward.”

“If I’m able to be assertive, then I would want to slay you away.”

“Oh, my, but you can’t do that yet. Because there should be other guests besides you. My mother chose four men as candidates as my marriage partner, and there is going to be only one chosen from them.”

That was true, Edgar and the fake earl was invited here for that purpose. Which means, there will be four men who will be trying to court Lydia.

That is a problem.

Lydia was his fiancée. Even if she didn’t have any intention to be so, for Edgar who was having a good, pleasant feeling in keep on saying that he was her fiancé, he wouldn’t dare be able to bear having another men approach her.

The only one who should reflect in those golden-green eyes should be him alone. If in case the rest of the three in the group was going to interfere, then he quickly made the strong decision that they were going to be put through hell.

It even should be against Lydia’s will to have to be forced to get closely acquainted with men she didn’t know while she was being possessed by Teresa. Her soul should be calling out for help.

Edgar pulled the young girl up to him.

She seemed embarrassed but still looked up at him with begging eyes. He didn’t

not like these kinds of girls. If they were to have a relationship, then they were surely be able to become aggressive and passionate lovers.

However, Edgar's heart pained at the identity of an obviously different personality other than Lydia.

There was no Lydia who would be angry or troubled or even end up nearly crying in tears when he would made approaches on her.

There was no Lydia who knew that Edgar was a good-for-nothing man and had her guard up around him and yet would seriously be worried about him.

He wanted to see her who was soft-hearted through-and-through, as she would be more worried than think low of him when she heard that he had dueled for the sake of a widow.

"Can you tell? I'm here to rescue you."

When he whispered that to her, she titled her head in confusion.

"My fairy, I promise I'll protect you, so you don't have to worry anymore."

For an instant, he thought he saw her golden-green eyes widen like they had understood his meaning.

It could have been the lighting blot that flashed against the gallery glass window and shined brightly in her eyes.

Even so, Edgar felt like he had found his Lydia and kissed her hand he held so tightly.

The four men who were chosen at the spiritual ritual the other day were going to all gather by tomorrow night.

Mrs. Collins said that her daughter Teresa would be introduced to them at the evening dinner seat.

But there was no reason for him to wait patiently till then.

If the mother had taken a liking to the fake earl, then he had to be careful.

"For the time being, the ones who are currently in this estate are Mrs. Collins and her nephew, Miss Carlton who is Miss Teresa, the earl imposter, the spiritualist and the old woman who is her assistant. The young maid who is Mrs. Collins attendant looks to be a close servant who she brought along with her from Manchester, but the other servants appear to be hired only during the period while the Madame is taking up residence here, so it is unclear whose

control each one is under.”

Finishing his dinner, Edgar returned to his private room and was listening to Raven’s report.

“The ones to arrive tomorrow is Lord Sir Stanley and Lord Sir Clark, both men have a peerage of Baronet.”

“If the mastermind, Ulysses is here, then he’s sure to be a man. The man that calls himself Earl Ashenbert is also suspicious, but there could be the possibility that he is one of the men who is going to arrive here tomorrow and is hiding amongst as one of the servants.”

His side had long ago managed to lure Edgar into the mouth of his trap. Even if he was anticipating that Edgar came in knowing that it was the enemy’s trap and not intending to remain calm and quiet, then he was sure to make his next move.

“I wonder what kind of move Ulysses would make next, my lord.”

“.....Prince does control the movements of his organization like the conductor of an orchestra. In order to reach the perfect finale, all of the instruments need to be set and organized so that every note wouldn’t miss a beat or melody. So Ulysses would move only according to how he was ordered to do. The problem is how my part is calculated and decided into that perfect score.”

“I wouldn’t be able to guess.”

“Most likely, they would have an approach in dealing with every one of the patterned movements I could think up of.”

“.....Then you are saying that having you go to that spiritual ritual was what they had expected.”

“At that time, I intended to make a move before them in order to shake them up, but now that I think about it, there wasn’t any kind of result like that.”

“Do you think that it was also in their calculation of staging Miss Carlton as the daughter Teresa?”

“That’s the thing. If that was the only thing that was coincidental....”

According to how much he had grasped about his enemy’s movements, there was no signs that they were targeting Lydia especially. He could imagine that it was a coincident for her to happen to help out Mrs. Collins.

Even if they needed a young woman in order to call back the spirit of the daughter Teresa, there was no reason that it had to be Lydia.

Because the bait that was needed in order to lure Edgar all the way out to this estate was the earl imposter and the spiritualist that looked exactly like Ermine. In any event, if it was completely out of their imagination to the enemy that Lydia came falling into all of this, then they would be forced to make changes to their plans.

To Edgar, that was a hope that he still hadn't lost to them.

"It's Lydia. She is the only thing that was unforeseen to the enemy. That's why I was able to gain the sword of the Blue Knight Earl thanks to her help. And I gained the title of earl."

Yes, she managed to pull the turn of events to a completely different direction that even Edgar was unable to predict.

What he didn't expect was that just with her extremely soft-heartedness and the pride and responsibility as a fairy doctor, she would act in ways that normally wouldn't be thought up of.

"She is my fairy of good luck. If I'm able to get her back, then don't you feel like everything would turn favorable to us? Yes, the first thing we should do is think about that."

"At the least, it is a plan that the enemies could expect."

"Raven, are you being sarcastic?"

"Please forgive me, what part of what I said sounded sarcastic?"

He asked him with a seriously apologetic tone, which made Edgar find it funny and laughed out loud.

After he had his fill of laughs, he was able to feel much more relaxed. It might be foolish for him to take his focus away from the attack of his enemies after he came climbing into the nest of his enemies.

But this case started with the art of resurrection. The one that Prince sent in looked to be someone who could use magical powers. Then, there was the possibility that the key to this would be something like someone like Lydia than practical wits and strength.

"Now that I think about it, where's Nico? He said to leave open the window, but

we can't in this much rain."

"It's all right, already. If I was made to wait forever, I'll be soaking wet."

When he turned towards the voice, he saw that there was a grey-haired cat sitting on top of the sofa which was covered with plenty of cushions.

"So you were able to get in."

"Every grand house has one or two servants who like cats. Once I meow cutely and rub up against them, then they won't hesitate to let me in. But I did secretly throw away the bowl of milk they poured for me."

After he said that, he drank a sip of whiskey in a glass that he had gotten from somewhere.

"I went to go see how Lydia was, but she doesn't recognize me at all. She chased me around and tried to pet me. I've said that a gentleman like me doesn't want to be treated like a cat, and yet."

No matter how you looked at him, he looked like a cat, so there was really nothing that could be done about that.

"Leave to me about her."

"What are you going to do?"

"For now, I'm going to go pay my respects to her."

Chapter 3 - Gatherers at the Ancient Battlefield

She heard in the far off distance of the sea, the sound of sad crying that mixed with the calls of the seagulls.

Lydia thought it was the seals who were crying.

She wondered if they would come down all this way to the southern seashores.

Or were they not real seals, but fairies instead?

Her mother had talked to her a lot about seal fairies. That's why, even if Lydia had never seen one before, they were creatures that felt nostalgic to her.

Her mother's homeland was one from the groups of far-off islands located north of Scotland. For her mother, who was born on a foggy and mountainous island that surrounded by the ocean filled with floating lonely barriers of ice, selkies seemed to be a close species of fairies who lived in the near-by seas.

They were said to be kind and considerate fairies who could feel the same emotions as humans.

Once they took off their coats and shift to a human, they would change to look like an honest and heartwarming young girl or a gentle and polite young man and easily adapt into the human world.

Then her mother told her, but selkies are still fairies of the sea.

They would all eventually put on their seal coats and return to the sea.

Humans would fear that a selkie who they become friendly with would return to the sea. They would wish for them to stay by their sides forever and hide their fur coats. Or there would be those who would try to use them since they were so submissive.

Selkies would not object to the human and would do as the human said, but for creatures of the sea, that was such a sad thing.

That's why Lydia wanted to do anything she could for the sake of the selkies who were being held captive.

She wanted to hurry and find their coats that were suppose to be hidden here

in this estate.

In the morning, Lydia sneaked out of her room so that she could look around the house.

It seemed like Lydia was able to return to herself at the crack of dawn till sunset.

Her memory was a blank from the evening of last night, and according to Suzy, the ghost of Teresa would come out at night.

Which means she needs to do something about Teresa or she won't be able to return home, even if she managed to escape from here. If the spiritualist was involved in making Lydia like this and how the seal fairies were, she wondered if she should go and meet this spiritualist.

While she was walking around in the grand house, she came out into a large garden. As she followed along the cobble stone pathway, she came to where she could see an arbor that supported a trellis of wisteria that climbed up it and saw there was someone standing there.

She thought she heard a woman's voice and went over expecting it to be Mrs. Collins, but Lydia stopped her walking and froze.

She gently shifted over towards the shadows of the trees and hid.

Er.....Ermine?

It was a beautiful woman wearing a black dress. The air about her was different since she had always been wearing men's clothes, but no matter how you looked at her, she was exactly alike as Ermine.

Her hair was a dark brown, cut shortly above her shoulders. The firm side of her face, and her mysteriously rosy-red lips were all the same features of Ermine that Lydia could remember.

She thought she had drowned in the sea of the merrows, but then, she wondered if she had survived. But, then, why was she here.

As she was mulling that over in her head, the old woman who was beside her called her 「Seraphita.」

Wasn't that the name of the spiritualist?

Ermine's the spiritualist?

“Seraphita, do you hate me?”

The spiritualist looked up sorrowfully at the old woman.

"I know you wish to die. But, please do not think in that way. One should not make themselves wish for the wrong outcome."

"Nana, whether I wish it or not, I am sure to die."

"No, even that man cannot rule over our heart's desires."

She didn't have any idea what they were talking about and didn't know if she should go out and talk to them, but then, someone grabbed ahold of Lydia's arm.

"You better not go out now. This way."

Since the man's hand pulling her hand to guide her felt so natural, she obediently followed him. When she looked up to see his face, Lydia was even more surprised.

Edgar?

But the Earl Ashenbert that came yesterday wasn't him.

Lydia thought she was being made to believe in make-believe even more.

They got away from the arbor and he led her into a small path that was surrounded by yellow gorse flowers so that they were hidden and finally stopped to turn around to face Lydia.

It was no mistake, this man with his bright golden hair, those ash mauve eyes that he smiled with, was Edgar. However, he spoke out to Lydia by calling her "Teresa."

"I wanted to see you under the bright sunlight. I know we'll be introduced to each other by Mrs. Collins tonight, but I quite remembering about how we spent time with each other last night, so I couldn't wait any longer."

Oh, my, goodness, was he trying to seduce Teresa?



“The light of the sun shines like its blessing the newly reborn you. You’re beautiful today too, Teresa.”

Finding out that he easily said the same kind of thing that he always told Lydia to any other girl, it made Lydia lose her temper.

“You frivolous man.”

Even if she slapped away his hand with all her might, Edgar didn’t look at all troubled and kept talking like he was used to it.

“Are you talking about me? Why?”

He might be used to being blamed by women. He must be confident that he could coax her and buy her back. That made her even more furious.

“I can’t believe you would actually try to seduce a ghost! Good lord, you’re like a wild animal.How dare you keep up with the engagement, I don’t want to be called the fiancée of a shameful man like that. I’d rather choose to live in the fairy land than marry someone like you!”

Before this, she had been trying to think of a plan to annul their engagement while Kelpie was away. She had completely forgotten about that since now wasn’t the time for that, but if Edgar was here, then Lydia thought it was good timing as she breathed in to yell at him some more.

“Listen closely, Edgar. Since I don’t have to worry about Kelpie hearing us, I’m going to say this straight. Hurry up and say that that engagement wasn’t for real!”

“Uhhh,Lydia?”

He couldn’t help but be confused.

With a winning smile, Lydia placed her fists on her hips and glared up at him.

“It seems like Lady Teresa is only able to possess me during the night. So it’s useless how ever much you try to seduce her. When it turns morning, I’m going to pretend to be Teresa and tell Mrs. Collins that you’re the most despicable kind of man there is. You understand?”

She was trying to pick a fight with him, and yet, Edgar relaxed his expression like he was relieved.

Lydia lost her steam at the sorrowing and painful look he was showing her and then was suddenly embraced by him gently.

“I’m so relieved.... I thought I wasn’t going to see you again; I didn’t know what to do.”

You really are good with coming up with such a smart thing to say. Even as she thought that, Lydia was flurried by how she felt like she wanted to cry.

Lydia thought that no one would realize that she was taken away from London and be in a place like this.

She realized at how disappointed she was when the Earl Ashenbert who appeared wasn’t Edgar.

The summer sun that she peered up to over beyond his shoulder felt so bright and then, like a blot of lighting, the thing that Lydia suddenly rose up from her memory was his kind voice.

「I promise to protect you, so there’s nothing to worry about.」

He said something like that even yesterday.

Didn’t he try to send his words to Lydia by looking into her eyes which only had Teresa’s consciousness?

Oh, but, that could also be one of his methods.

It was a fact that he was trying to seduce Teresa who was possessing Lydia. The reason that he came here, was because he was after the spiritualist and so

perhaps, he could just have happened to find Lydia.

Lydia somehow managed to push him away and turned around to leave.

"Oh, wait, Lydia, you were so passionate when I paid a visit to your room last night, you don't have to be so cold so sudden."

Huh? Thought Lydia, and stopped her walk.

That wasn't me. But.....

"Don't you want to know how we were like?"

"Wh-wh-what did you do-----!"

When she went up to him again, he gave her a suggestive grin.

"Well, we are engaged to each other, and I'll take responsibility for last night, so there's nothing to worry."

"You did something that needs responsibility taken?!!"

Lydia turned bright red and nearly swooned, but Edgar laughed and said it was a joke, but she only reconfirmed that not one of what he said could be trusted.

"The maid was keeping her eye on me the whole time, so how could I possibly make any moves? We just had a pleasant conversation."

"Suzy did?"

"She's a good, serious girl and cares for who she works for. Even if it was for the sake of Mrs. Collins, I could sense that she felt awful for what's happened to you and was desperately trying to be heroic by wanting to protect you."

Managing to calm herself down, Lydia nodded.

"She was the only one who said that she would help try to let me go home safely. But she warned me that the spiritualist was dangerous so I had to be cautious and it was best that I pretend to be Teresa for a while. Oh, yes, I saw the spiritualist for the first time just now, but she looked just like Ermine."

"Ahh, yes, I was surprised as well. It was the first time I was able to see her in the light, but she looks all the more exactly alike to her."

His voice sounded unusually stiff and nervous.

To Edgar, Ermine was someone who was like Raven, a dear family member to him. Even if he was betrayed by her, he should still be wishing that she were alive.

"Then, she survived and...."

“We can’t make that decision yet. Unless we have proof that it really is her... Anyways, there’s a man who is using that spiritualist. He’s one of Prince’s men and his name is Ulysses. It was apparently Ulysses’ plan to bring back Mrs. Collins’ daughter from the dead and get me involved into that.”

A man. That person called Ulysses was definitely the one who had kidnapped Lydia. And he might also be the one who is making Ermine do as he says. Even if that spiritualist was indeed the real Ermine, it wasn’t a situation that Edgar could optimistically be wild with joy.

“.....So that’s what was going on.”

It seemed like the reason he was written up in the gossip papers after he attended the spiritual ritual wasn’t for a sporty purpose like having his eyes on the spiritualist.

“Huh? But there’s another person here to claims to be Earl Ashenbert here.”

“It might just be a method of theirs to try and provoke me so they could lure me out, but I don’t know yet how that man is related to Ulysses who is behind all of this. Either way, since we came all the way here, it looks like we’re only left with facing Prince’s outside man. That’s why it would be best for you to get out of here and hide yourself somewhere safe.”

It looked like it was a situation that was much more troublesome than Lydia had imagined.

“I’ll think of a way for you to slip out. We’ll do something about Teresa later.”

Even if she was possessed by a ghost, as long as she was able to escape from here, there would be no danger. And if it was Edgar, Lydia knew that he would be able to safely let her escape.

But....

“But I can’t escape all by myself. It looks like there are captive seal fairies that are forced to stay and work here. I think that maybe the man you said named Ulysses has taken away their freedom. Maybe one of those selkies had found out about there being a fairy doctor that works for the earl. She wanted to ask for my help so she guided me to Mrs. Collins and called me to that hotel. But, that selkie was killed..... I’m guessing that the man working for Prince transferred the ghost daughter to take over me so that I wouldn’t release the

selkies, but I want to help them no matter what.”

Edgar looked like he was thinking that over as he furrowed his brows.

“It’s dangerous...., is what I really want to say, but you’re a fairy doctor, and you have pride in your work, so I’d wager it would be useless for me to try and stop you.”

And then he thought for a bit and opened his mouth.

“Lydia, then we need to pull together and play our cards right.”

Lydia nodded her head as she stood nervously.

“In order for that, it’s important that we act like lovers.”

Eh? Really?

She tilted her head at such leap in logic, but Edgar pressed on further.

“The daughter Teresa is innocently enjoying how she has come back to life. She has every intention of choosing and marrying one of the four guests in this marriage match that the lady of the house had arranged for her. Now, Lydia, there is no guarantee that a shameless man wouldn’t sneak into your room during the night when you have no control, and it would be a problem if he forced himself on you, wouldn’t it?”

“But, wouldn’t a normal, respectable man be a gentleman? Unlike you,” said Lydia as she honestly thought that.

“Oh, come on, like that is possible. And, besides, it looks like Miss. Teresa likes to be approached by men and so she hardly ever pushes men away. She didn’t mind how much I got near her. I was able to hold her hand the whole time and pull her shoulder close, and she was at my mercy the whole time until the maid finally butted in.”

“Wh-what do you mean by at your mercy!”

“Are you all right with having men other than me do that to you?”

She nearly blew her top, but panicked when he told her that and now she was completely frantic and didn’t know what to do.

She thought she couldn’t bare such a thing, and she hadn’t a thought to spare in questioning herself why at the corner of her mind that she felt she’d prefer Edgar than anyone, and would only shake her head to the sides violently.

“I won’t let anyone put their hand on you. I’ll have Teresa have her eyes only on

me. That's why you too have to be looking at him only during the day. Understand."

If she thought about it hard, she wouldn't know how that was related to fighting against Prince's subordinate, but at that time, Lydia nodded her head to Edgar's momentum, thinking that it was a terribly smart maneuver.

Her ardor to have him agree to annul the engagement had completely flown out of her mind.



On that night, it was a different night than what Lydia spent yesterday. As the sun came up and she grew drowsy, she could sense the same feeling when Teresa was waking up, but because she pledged to herself not to fall asleep, she was able to remain awake.

However, even if her conscious was awake, it was the same situation that she was possessed by Teresa, and Lydia could only watch nervously in great suspense.

She was starting to regret that it might have been comforting for her if she was rather asleep at the dinner seat with the guests that Mrs. Collins had gathered. The dress that Teresa chose was a flamboyant rose red, which Lydia didn't think it could possibly suit her, and she didn't like the perfume she had on either, and was nervous from feeling like she didn't belong sitting at the dinner.

On the other hand, Teresa and Mrs. Collins were in an extremely good mood. Lydia had thought that it was ridiculous to be thinking about seriously marrying a ghost girl who revived, but it looked like the men gathered here were serious. It was absolutely comical to see that everyone was ardent on trying to win the affections of daughter Teresa.

But it looked like both Teresa and Mrs. Collins were both satisfied the more they were praised and flattered.

The enormous dowry that came along with the daughter from the wealthy family must have been necessary in order to rebuild the men's family finance that was near crumbling, but if that were so, then the existence of the Earl Ashenbert who couldn't possibly be in trouble with money must sure be disliked by the rest of the company.

Lydia focused her attention on the blond-haired young man who called himself the earl. He must have had a little too much to drink as he appeared to be full of glee and joy, but he still looked frivolous, and she couldn't tell if he was acting like the rumored lady's man earl or not, but Lydia thought he looked weak in the head.

Even though, Mrs. Collins' smile was aimed mainly at the earl imposter.

However, in regards to Teresa, she was distracted about Edgar who was called a viscount here. And in comparison, Edgar wasn't paying her any attention at all.

Hey, what are you doing talking over to the young boy Oscar sitting next to you. You usually wouldn't spare a glance at men.

On top of that, even when Teresa tried to start a conversation with him, he only returned with a halfhearted response. Lydia tilted her head in confusion at where his lines of flattery that at times were too much.

To begin with, Lydia would be troubled if Teresa got too friendly with another man. Even Edgar had said himself that he wouldn't let that happen.

And yet, it looked like Teresa was made to be furious at that attitude of Edgar, and openly started to coquet to the other three men.

Oh, now look, she's made a promise to go out on a boat tomorrow. Which means, I have to go out with this earl imposter?

Looked what you've done, Edgar. You're always doing opposite of what you're saying. I knew I couldn't trust you!

Going through this and that, by the time dinner was finally over, Lydia was completely exhausted.

But unrelated to Lydia's tiredness, Teresa had more than enough energy.

"I can't think what the viscount is thinking? He came and made his way into my room yesterday, and acted like he was interested in me, and yet tonight, it's like he's completely ignoring me? Oh, Suzy, what do you think?"

"Oh, I wouldn't know...., I can't really grasp what the misters are thinking....."

Teresa, who returned to her room, was pacing around in her room in outrage.

Her maid Suzy was waiting for her to help her change, as she replied standing troubled.

"Maybe I should start a relationship with the Earl Ashenbert like Mother said."

You have to be joking, whispered Lydia.

“But, my lady, Viscount Middleworth really is a gentleman who is a toast to one’s eyes. The way he carries himself is like a noble more than anybody else or so I think.”

“Oh, my, do you perhaps have feelings for him?”

“Eh? Oh, no, not me.... But Miss Seraphita had been asking questions about him. I thought that even if it was a beautiful woman like her, she would be interested about a handsome man.”

If she were to be interested about Edgar, maybe she might be Ermine.

“Miss Seraphita was.....?”

Teresa suddenly stopped walking, and she appeared to have lost her calm.

Since Seraphita was a spiritualist, she must not have perceived her as a young woman. But, she must have realized after recalling that she was quite a beauty and very seductive.

“Suzy, where is the viscount’s room?”

“Excuse me?”

“I’m going to go kick out a man who would ignore me and try to seduce another woman.”

But Suzy didn’t say anything about Edgar seducing the spiritualist.

If Edgar was kicked out, oh, then what should I do?

Lydia would be in trouble, but Teresa wouldn’t have any idea of that, and quickened her pace to leave the room.

But, when she opened the door, she suddenly stopped.

Because, Edgar was standing right outside the door.

“Teresa, where are you going?”

“Oh, she was just heading to my lord viscount’s...”

As Suzy was about to finish what she was saying, Teresa stomped on her foot and stuck her nose in the air and replied.

“It’s my freedom to do as I please. What would be your business?”

“I thought you would open some of your time up for my sake again tonight.”

As he said it a bit arrogantly, he stood in the doorway so that Teresa wouldn’t be able to leave the room.

"I thought you had lost your interest in me? Because, just earlier, you wouldn't even give me a glance."

"That's what you were thinking?"

He made a surprised look, like that was unexpected for him.

"Well, you're right, I wasn't able to see your face at all. It was apparent that Mrs. Collins favors the earl, and you were talking with him like you were enjoying yourself, so I was feeling subservient."

There was no way Edgar would feel subservient.

"But, I thought that perhaps you were testing how serious I was by what you were doing. I came here tonight, because I believed that you were waiting for me again....."

"I couldn't tell if a man was serious even if I tested him."

Teresa still seemed a little angry and said that as her face turned the other way, but even Lydia could tell that her heart was pounding.

"Are you saying that I should head back to my room? If I were to remain feeling so ill at ease like this, then I might seek out someone else in your place."

Teresa made a panicked look. It seemed like she was feeling like she should hurry, probably because the spiritualist Seraphita came to her mind.

"Who do you mean by that? So you don't mind even if it wasn't me."

There was no way that Teresa could have realized that she had fallen into the trap set by Edgar at the moment she let out her jealousy at him. Of course, Lydia hadn't realized it either.

Edgar swiftly stepped into the room and closed the door behind him. Suzy was shut outside, making the two of them alone in the room.

Edgar held the door with his back so it wouldn't open and pulled Teresa to him. To his forcefully that didn't allow her to say anything back, Lydia panicked and desperately tried to move her body.

Then, her left arm just barely responded. Using that, she managed to prevent their bodies from touching each other.

Edgar didn't let that stop him, and tightly squeezed Teresa, no Lydia's body to him. Lydia wasn't able to move at all and that made her more panicked.

Oh, no, this is bad, she thought, but there was nothing she could do.

All of Edgar's flirtatious lines were rather light, so he seemed to not mind if she rejected him and gave her an opening to escape. But, when he took forceful measures, it was like he had his eyes set on his prey. He had no intention of lettering her escape.

Lydia still didn't really know what it meant for Edgar when he would win over a woman's heart, but she had the vague feeling that this situation was one step in front of that.

".....Oh, please, stop, viscount....."

Even if she said that, Teresa didn't try to escape.

"Why, you are the only person that appears in my eyes."

At his sweet words, Teresa's heart thumped rapidly. Or was it Lydia's? She was starting to not be able to tell the difference.

Lydia was now just barely keeping the strength in her left hand in trying to fight against him, but Teresa was practically limp.

"Look this way."

Still keeping one of his arms holding her to him, he used his other to bring her face up.

She was faced with heated, passionate eyes that made her feel dizzy.

Ohh, she wanted to complain about why of all things, she was wearing a dress that had the front of it was so revealing.

"You knew, right? From the first time I laid eyes on you, I was completely captivated by those mystifying eyes of yours."

He was talking about Lydia's eyes. But then, for that moment, when Lydia had the feeling like he was talking about her, it also made the strength in her legs give out.

From her hair to the tip of her toes, the one that was appearing in Edgar's eyes was Lydia's body. She didn't know which one of them he was turning his attention to.

Oh, this is idiotic.

Whether it was Lydia or Teresa, there was sure to be hardly any difference between them to Edgar.

After she came to that conclusion, she was barely able to keep up her fight.

And yet, his fingers didn't hold back and caressed her cheek. A shiver ran throughout her body.

Like he was enjoying her reaction, his fingers ran from her cheek down along her neck and traced the nape of her neck. Just by having him take off the Belgian lace chocker, she was filled with the embarrassing sensation like she was revealing her entire body's nakedness, and yet Teresa didn't move.

His fingers went further on to trace her shoulder and wandered around the hollow of her clavicle.

Wh-what do you think you're doing. Oh, my goodness, you pervert! I won't forgive you if you do anything more than this!

Lydia was the only one who was single-mindedly in a fret. Even though Lydia had lost her cool, she didn't realize that her left hand, which could move, was remaining still as it tucked in her fingers into a ball.

"I want to go on and make you mine."

I said stop.

".....Are you sure someone like me will do?"

Oh, the worst has come to the worst. Edgar, you idiot, what are you planning to do with me!

But, no matter what much Lydia was yelling that out inside of her head, Teresa was already swooned over and spellbound by Edgar's gaze.

It looked like Teresa had been played into the spell of Edgar.

Ahh, I knew he was an unbelievable, wicked man.

He purposefully ignored her at the dinner table and irritated her and that had ended up making her mind filled about him. And just when she was like that, he intruded himself and then, completely turned over his hand, on top of that, he stirred up her feelings of jealousy and used that to his advantage and made his attack. And so he was able to easily win her affections.

Most likely, Teresa only had eyes for Edgar right now.

"I want you."

His lips dangled above her lips, almost touching hers but not, then brushed up against her ear lobe.

Lydia went completely frozen and whispered, father, I'm sorry.

If Teresa didn't refuse him, everything was going to go as Edgar wanted. Her heart was beating rapidly and she was nearly pushed to tears.

Oh, she'd rather faint right now.

However, he softly let his grip go.

"Ohh, but I know very well. That if I were to think of you, then I shouldn't surrender myself to my heated emotions."

All at once, Lydia lost all of her strength, but Teresa gave a little stir like she didn't get her fill.

"Oh, of course...., since you are a gentleman."

At last, Suzy was able to open the door just a slight that had been held shut by Edgar's back, and peeked in nervously to make sure everything was all right.

"Uh, my lady."

"Nothing to worry, Suzy."

She said that as she was leaning up against him, like she was still watching a dream.

"Teresa, would you spend your time with me tomorrow?"

"Why, yes, of course."

"It's a promise."

Teresa finally lifted up her face and smiled happily as her cheeks blushed pink and took out a silk handkerchief.

"A token of our promise."

"It has such cute needlework done on it."

"I stitched it in. I felt like it was sort of bland being an all white handkerchief."

Now that she recalled, the one point of a four-leaf clover and a ladybug was indeed what she was stitching before dinner. In such a short time, it came out quite wonderfully.

"You have quite the skill."

Being complimented, she smiled happily.

What an honest girl, thought Lydia. She believed every word of Edgar and floated in the sweet thought of being a happy lover.

Lydia was a little envious.

If she was able to believe Edgar from the bottom of her heart and be able to

have feelings for him, then Lydia might also be in complete happy bliss.

And while Lydia was thinking about that and had her guard down, Teresa brought her cheek up against Edgar's chest again.

Because what just happened was too much for Lydia to bare with, she wasn't able to quickly notice her embarrassment and while her mind was lingering as she was starting to feel his warmth, there was a terrible commotion and an spine-chilling scream.

Lydia and Teresa were surprised and froze, while Edgar shifted his focus on the noise.

"Wh-what is it?"

".....I'll go take a look."

When Edgar stepped out into the hallway, a man jumped out from the shadows.

But then, one more person's figure immediately moved right after. It was Raven.

He swiftly grabbed ahold of the man. He twisted his hold on the man to hold him down and held him in place.

"Whoa..., no, stop...."

Edgar walked over to Raven to look down at the groaning man and shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, if it isn't Earl Ashenbert, I thought you were a ruffian who had gotten into the house."

The young blond-haired man who could maybe be described as good looking was indeed the earl imposter.

"You're wrong....., lord viscount, we have bigger problems.....,I was looking for you."

"What is your business?"

"I-I saw it, a ghost...."

"A ghost?"

".....Hey, will you let go of me already."

"Raven, that's enough."

After Edgar said that, he finally released the earl imposter.

“Isn’t it a little too late for someone who came to ask for Miss Teresa’s hand in marriage to be spooked by a ghost.”

“That’s a different story...., it’s a ghost that attacks people!”

He didn’t pay any attention to his ruffled necktie and leaned himself over towards Edgar.

“So you were attacked? Was she a beauty?”

“It’s a murder!”

“Which means you’re now a ghost?”

“No! Not me, Sir Stanley was! His room is covered with blood,”

“Blood.....?” gasped Teresa and in fear, held onto Edgar.

Why do you always try to touch him every chance you get.

It seemed the earl imposter had just realized that Teresa was there, and after he took a glance, he made a difficult face, but he must have decided there were more important matters and quickly explained about what he came across.

“It was the room next to mine, and I heard a terribly loud noises and went I went over to yell at him to be quiet, I saw that the room was covered in blood.”

“I see.”

“It isn’t ‘I see’. This is homicide.”

“Even if it were as you said, if in case you were the perpetrator, I might become the second victim after I head over to the room with you.”

“Huhh? Why would I!”

“Of course, so that you could have Miss. Teresa all to yourself. Aren’t the other suitors an obstacle?”

“I would never do such a thing!”

Edgar carefully observed the man who might be working for Prince.

“Then, why would you go all the way to look for me?”

“.....I just had a feeling, you looked reliable,”

He scratched his head like he too was baffled at his behavior. If his ignorant, foolish behavior was part of his plan, then it was hard to tell if he was smart or just plain dumb.

“Anyways, I saw a ghost in his room. This white shadow floated up into the air and vanished.... This place is a ghost mansion for sure!”

“Hard to say if it was just a shadow. It’s night and it’s dark, so you could have just been your imagination.”

“Are you saying a living human being murderer would paint a whole room with blood? It isn’t normal.”

“There are humans who aren’t normal either.”

Edgar thought hard and silently for a moment, but then said “Well, it’s better to go take a look.”

It was hard to believe what kind of curiosity Teresa had, as she said she was coming with them. Lydia didn’t want to see any pools of blood, but she wasn’t in any position to refuse.

Of course, Raven also came along, and in the end, Suzy joined them also, as all of them followed the leading earl imposter.

There was no gas lamp equipped in the remote estate that was situated away from the town of people, and the candle that Raven held was the only thing that lit up the hallway beyond them. For the eyes that were used to living in London, this was too dark to see anything.

The sound of the waves and wind mixed with each other and reached their ears which gave the place an eerie impression.

At the end of the long hallway, they were finally able to come to a door that was left open. It seemed the earl imposter must have left it open after he was terrified.

That was apparently Sir Stanley’s room as the earl imposter stopped right before it.

“I shall go ahead.”

Raven was quick and stepped up in front of Edgar and entered the room. Edgar continued after him and entered, leaving Teresa to slowly peek into it from the doorway.

The candle stand that Raven brought was the only light in the room, but didn’t take any time at all to see that the table and chairs were all were thrown all over the room in havoc. And one could see even in this dim light that blood was splattered and soaked all over the table cloth and curtain, as well as the walls and windows.

Lydia grew nauseous, and Teresa and Suzy backed away from the doorway. Raven inspected the closet and under the room's bed, but just reported in a calm voice that "There is no body."

"Well, Viscount, what do you think?"

If he wasn't acting, it seemed like the earl imposter had finally calmed down.

"I don't know, we can't determine if this blood belongs to Sir Stanley. More than that, we are just guests. I think it's best to report this to the owner of the house."

"But, the owner of here is Mrs. Collins. I hate to say it, but she isn't the type of lady who could handle this kind of situation."

Edgar also nodded.

"There was one more member of the Collins family."

"You mean the nephew. He's still a child."

"He isn't so young to be labeled as a child. He is a man after all."

Raven nodded at Edgar's glance and left the room, which means he must have gone to call Mrs. Collins' nephew.

Lydia became nervous at the earl imposter slinking himself into the room and getting near Edgar.

He might be working for Prince, and if something were to happen while Raven was away.....

But he was just timidly peering over Edgar's shoulder to look down at a puddle of blood.

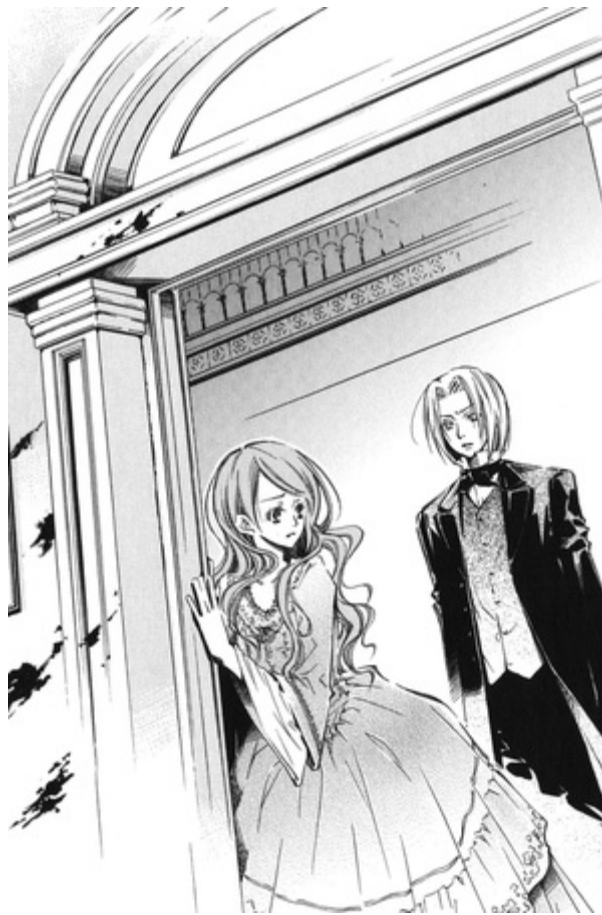
Instead of the earl imposter, Edgar turned his eyes to look outside the window. The black ocean that could be seen as it reflected the moonlight seemed to be making strange patterns in its waves and Lydia thought it odd as well, but her attention was immediately taken away at Raven's quick return.

"Oh, my....., this is terrible."

Oscar, Mrs. Collins's nephew gasped as he took a few steps back from the doorway he had just nearly passed.

"Oscar, you had better search if there is anyone intruder that could have entered into this house. Just to be safe, you should also search for Sir Stanley's whereabouts, whether he is dead or alive."

“Yes, you’re right, I’ll start on that. But,”



He tilted his head like he had a question about something.

“Viscount, will it be all right for me to trust you? There is no proof that the one who did this is one of you guests.”

“If you were to say that, then I would naturally be suspicious of you, or Mrs. Collins, or the spiritualist that I haven’t seen the face of.”

The young man signed with a hmm.

“To begin with, I thought it was ridiculous and stupid about the talk of reviving Teresa and marrying her off. I will send out a messenger to the town tomorrow and call for the police. If someone feels they would be in trouble by that, then I think it’s best for you to quickly leave. For those guests who aren’t, please make sure and lock your doors and windows to protect yourself. Even if something more were to happen, I’m not taking responsibility.”

“You’re calmer than I expected.”

Oscar looked over towards Edgar with a glare.

“I’ll return the comment right back at you, my lord viscount. For the time being, I am the substitute for the lord of the Collins’ family.”

“.....It was a ghost, just like I thought.....”

The one who whimpered that was the fake earl.

“You remember, about this being a famous place for an ancient battleground. There’s still hatred of the soldiers who died that lingers here....”

“Battleground? Oh, the Battle of Hastings, you mean. The story was that this is the first place in England which was covered in blood when it was nearly invaded by the Normans.”

“That’s quite the old story, but if it were about ghosts, then it might be best if we ask for a word of advice from the spiritualist.”

“She has long gone off to bed. It seems she’s always goes to sleep early. If one of the ghosts that is controlled by her was the perpetrator, then it might be useless even if you lock your doors.”

Just when Oscar turned around to leave, Teresa suddenly began to tremble and shake.

It seemed like she was aimlessly listening to their conversation, but her reaction was so sudden.

Lydia was also enveloped by a bad feeling. For some unknown reason, she was filled with fear and blood rushed out of her face and she became dizzy. She helped herself by crouching down.

“Oh, my, my lady, what is the matter?”

Suzy let out a scream, and Edgar, who noticed came over to her and steadied her shoulder.

“Teresa, are you all right?”

“Yes....., I just feel a little unwell....”

“This isn’t the type of thing that a young woman should witness. It’s best that you return to your room.”

She obediently leaned up against Edgar who steadied her up.

Like I said, don’t use every opportunity to hang onto him.

Lydia used her left hand to make a gap between the two of them, but when she felt Edgar’s warm hand on her shoulder, then she recalled the situation from earlier and her body started to heat up when she remembered how they were nearly pushing their boundaries.

Joining with her feelings of sickness, she became dizzy.

At this rate, she wouldn't know what kind of attitude she should take when she was going to meet Edgar tomorrow.

"You let Teresa be taken away by him. Are you all right with that?"

Oscar's voice could be heard as he spoke to the fake earl from behind them.



After Edgar escorted Teresa back to her room, he arrived to his room and was inspecting the handkerchief that she had given him.

"Is something the matter, Lord Edgar?"

Raven, who had just returned from his rounds in inspecting inside the house, walked over to Edgar who sat in deep thought.

"Wouldn't you normally stitch your name into a handkerchief?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose."

"No matter how I look at it, the initials that she stitched on the side of the cloth look like an M, not a T."

"She claims to have no memory about herself. Maybe she didn't intend it to be her initials."

"Yes, maybe so. But, however, even if she didn't remember about herself when she was alive and she were to be the ghost of Teresa, then there would be a part of her character not like anyone else that remained, right? Like her personality and her tastes. She wanted to put in needlework on a plain white handkerchief, and she chose this design, then maybe this is her real character."

The ghost inside of Lydia, may not be Teresa. It was unimaginable for Teresa, who had died at five years old to be able to come up with doing needlework and even perform such a perfect job.

If her initial was actually M, then..

He had a feeling like something important was hidden behind that, but he couldn't recall what it was.

Edgar gave up and turned around to look over towards Raven.

"Did the letter from Paul arrive?"

Yes, replied Raven and took out a letter from his inner coat pocket.

It was the one that he went to get from the town post office before sundown.

It was the report about the findings on the investigation that he had asked, but

they still reported that they hadn't come up with anything and were investigating about the real identity of the man who was using the name of Earl Ashenbert. Even the two Baronets were using fake names. He didn't know if they were possibly Ulysses or they were just con-artists after the family fortune. There was another report that caught his eye.

By trailing after the money-lender from earlier, they were able to find out that the man named Ulysses who was said to work for Prince, had been on the ship, Venus that had arrived in London a month ago. And on that same passenger list, the name Oscar Collins was listed.

Mr. Collins' younger brother was operating a business in America. Oscar was his son. The reason for his trip to England was to study-abroad starting this fall.

"Raven, do you think this is a coincidence?"

"So there is a possibility that Oscar and Ulysses had already met aboard the ship. So perhaps Ulysses decided to use Oscar from then."

"If anything, I have a feeling like he actually got on the same ship, with Oscar in mind. Most likely, in order to get close to the Collins family."

"So it was part of Prince's plan to get the Collins family involved in this."

"It must be. He has gone through quite some trouble in his preparations, and it looks like cornering me isn't the only goal they had in mind."

Then, Edgar turned his eyes towards the note that was quickly scribbled on the corner of the letter.

"It looks like they got information in regards to that as well. It seems they weren't able to include all of it in the letter, Raven, will you go to the town again tomorrow? There should be someone from the 'Scarlet Moon' whose coming."

Yes, he said and nodded.

Oscar Collins. He was just a sixteen year old boy. He wondered if the boy was being used without knowing anything about Ulysses' plan.

He said that he didn't trust the spiritualist that had revived Teresa, but perhaps it was Ulysses who was making him say that.

He wanted to believe that Oscar wouldn't have a reason that would make him play a part in deceiving Mrs. Collins who was his aunt, but if there was a

possibility that he was being made to move to that man's wish, then Edgar had to be careful.

However, then would could Ulysses be.

With only this much information, it was hard to decide on who.

As Edgar mulled that over in his head, he held the letter over the fire of the lamp to burn it away.

Chapter 4 - The Sea and Selkies

Lydia could hardly even sleep and stayed awake, waiting for dawn. Even if Teresa fell asleep, it seemed like this body wasn't able to return to Lydia's control until the sun came up.

The clouded sky that hanged over them wasn't able to let them feel like dawn had arrived, but in the midst of the faint sunlight, Lydia finally felt released from the bind of Teresa and got up from her bed and quickly changed her clothes. And she had the dazed thought.

Edgar really is a true and genuine philanderer.

She should have known that, but when she remembered how she witnessed him use his techniques and charm to win over Teresa, she sort of became depressed. At the same time, she became furious.

She will never marry that kind of man. She made that clear to herself once more.

But another thing that was made clear to her was that Edgar was still holding himself back and going easy on Lydia.

If he wanted to have Lydia no matter what, then in actuality, it would mean it would be easy for him to do that.

He was thinking that he could make their engagement certain and carry that into marriage anytime he wanted, and so he was enjoying himself as he was half joking around by flirting with Lydia.

She wasn't going to lose. Lydia lifted her head and to her ears, she could hear the howling sound of the strong winds that were being blown in by the sea.

In comparison, inside the house, it was overly quiet.

Even though there was that incident last night, there was no noise of the servants making a commotion.

"Maybe the police haven't arrived yet."

"It seems like they can't come."

The one who said that was Nico, who appeared from out of the dressing room.

“Nico! You came?”

“I did come, but I’ve been hiding because I don’t want that ghost girl that’s in you to chase me around.”

Lydia knelt down and neared herself to match the height of Nico’s eyes as he stood on his hind feet to look at the face of her dear friend and relaxed in relief.

“It looks like things have gotten out of our hands.”

“Well, we’ll manage it somehow.”

Like one would to a little child, Nico patted Lydia’s head with one of his small front feet.

Nico, who had been her mother’s partner, most likely was much, much older than Lydia. From his eyes, Lydia must still seem like a small infant of a child.

He would act only on whim and was self-centered, and would disappear when it was dangerous, and she could bash at him every day that he was such an unreliable fairy cat, but he was still her best friend and she did depend on him.

Unlike a normal cat, he didn’t let her touch him that much, but Lydia loved the furry and soft part of Nico.

“But, what do you mean about the police not coming?”

“Since the tides are so violent, they said it would be too dangerous if the waves came up even if it turns to low tides and the path opens up. So of course, they can’t use any boats and we can’t send out any messengers.”

When she went over to the window to look out to the sea, she saw the white waves splashing up against the rocks and roll and twist violently.

In between the waves, Lydia thought she saw some kind of black creature pop its head up above the surface and strained her eyes.

“A seal.....? Could it be a selkie.”

“Ahh, the one working for Prince might have captured some selkies and using them to work for him. I heard what is going on from the Earl, but if so these waves might be because the selkies are roughing the ocean. All of this is just too good of a timing.”

“Timing?”

“Unless the waves don’t calm down, there’s no way anybody can leave from here. It’s like we are practically deserted here together with the perpetrator of

last night.”

He was right, if we couldn't contact with the mainland, then this was the perfect situation for the culprit. So Ulysses might have controlled the selkies and making them do this.

“But I can't understand something, if he had done such a horrible thing like kill a selkie, then he would have faced the rebellion of the selkies. Because their strength as a group is immensely strong. And so I wonder is the man Ulysses is all right.”

Nico stood on his hind legs and crossed his arms as he thought.

“He must have worked out something so that that can't happen. Ones who try and use fairies need to know quite a lot about them in order to do that.”

“You're saying that he knows of a way to evade being rebelled against?”

“Like he had done something to win the gratitude of the selkies in the past. When selkies come to the end of their long lifespan, you heard that they entrust their hearts to a human that they've put their trust with. It's proof of their lasting friendship. The rest of them aren't able to harm a human who has that.”

Selkies are a fairy that is close to humans. Their spiritual nourishment is their communication with humans and they feel happiness the more they're able to maintain a good relationship with them. Especially, the feelings of love from a human who holds a selkies' heart brings peace and prosperity, and that's why selkies protect the safety of the people whose lives are supported by the sea.

Although, it wasn't that common for selkies to entrust their hearts, so they would not give it with just any kind of gratitude they felt.

The human who obtained the heart would have the power to control the selkies' destiny, so it would only be restricted to those who could be trusted from generation to generation.

“But a human who would be given something like that wouldn't try to use the selkies.”

“Well, there also is the case that the person concerned wasn't the one who received.”

“.....You're saying that he could have gotten it some other way?”

So it might not be someone who was the legitimate owner. If in case the one

who hand the heart had evil purposes, then that alone would cause pain to the souls of the selkie clan, and they would become poisoned from the anxiety of not being healed.

She wanted to do something, but she didn't know who Ulysses was could might be the one who has the 'heart.'

"Anyways, I have to focus on their coats than the heart. It probably would be difficult to try and carry a whole number of them at once, so I think the coats would be hidden somewhere in this estate. Nico, you wouldn't be eyed as suspicious not matter which room you're in."

"Whaaat, you're saying that I have to search for them?"

"Of course, I'll look for them too, but I have to pretend to be Teresa during the day, and I won't have any freedom at night."

Nico tsked with his tongue, but went down on all fours in a hurry when there was a knock on the door.

The one who came into the room was Suzy the maid.

"Good morning, Miss Carlton."

She lowered her head, and then she noticed Nico.

"Oh, my, a cat. I'm terribly sorry; someone must have let it in."

"Oh, that's all right. I love cat anyway."

Nico acted like a cat so that he wouldn't be thrown out and purposefully went over to Lydia and rubbed himself up against her leg.

"Oh, is that so. Um, to tell you the truth, last night, something terrible happened...."

"Yes, I know. I was being possessed by Teresa, but I still had my conscious."

"Oh, my, then Miss. Carlton, you must have also witnessed that sight."

When she nodded, the maid made a cross at her chest.

"But, um, I would like to ask you to please not let the lady of the house know about that. The young lord Oscar has also made sure that the servants wouldn't let that slip either."

"I understand."

Indeed, this might be too much to handle for the mental unstable Mrs. Collins.

"And, one more thing, uh, I was entrusted this by Lord Viscount Middleworth.

He asked him to give it to Miss. Carlton when she wakes up.”

The thing Suzy handed out was a letter.

When she opened it up, it turned out to be a joke of a love letter which started out with the sweet ‘To my dearest’ and went on to say about how this was a fated meeting and a love like this would never come again. Of course, he must have written it so that it wouldn’t be an unnatural letter sent to Teresa, but he must be aware that Lydia was the one who was going to read it.

It seems like the thing he wanted to let her know was the last few lines at the end of the letter.

[If possible, I would like to have our courting be officially acknowledged by Mrs. Collins as soon as possible. I’ll pay a visit to your morning room around the time when breakfast is over. I’m intending to get her official recognition in my courtship with you.]

Since there was that kind of incident last night, Edgar was trying to quickly categorize those who were he could trust and those who were suspicious.

Lydia as Teresa wouldn’t spare anytime to choose Edgar. And if Mrs. Collins was able to acknowledge that, then they would be able to keep the other suitors at bay.

So he would be able to keep Lydia at a close enough distance where he could see her always.

As long as they were going to be confined in this house along with the culprit because of the weather, then this must mean that they couldn’t sit tight and quietly wait for the enemy’s next move.

However, even if she was able to guess Edgar’s intention, it still was a letter so embarrassing that she couldn’t let anyone read it.

She hid it swiftly away from Nico who tried to peer over to read it.

More importantly, the thought of ‘that big fat liar’ was whirling around inside Lydia’s head.

How dare he talk about an official courtship? It’s a big mistake to think that anyone would easily be completely enamored about him.

She thought, losing her coherence.

Edgar was only trying to secure the safety of this place by seducing and winning

over Teresa and furthermore, and trying to keep Lydia close enough so that he could keep an eye on her.

In other words, this was a strategy and not a problem about becoming enamored or not.

She knew that, and yet she doubted his nerves after he went all that far and seduced Teresa last night and now he was rolling out sweet lines to Lydia this morning.

“The viscount must be a good acquaintance of Miss Carlton.”

“Huh? Ohh,I guess.”

Lydia somehow managed to show Suzy a twitching smile.

“I was told that you were a very important person, so to please take care of her. I thought that the lord was a little coercive and fickle person since he was making advances towards the Miss. Teresa as soon as he arrived here, but he was just worried sick about Miss. Carlton. I see that in order to save you, he had no other choice but announce his candidacy as the young miss’ marriage partner.”

That was not true. However she thought about it, he was enjoying making moves towards Teresa.

“Things had turned out like this, but he was kind enough not to blame the lady of the house and said that he was going to face the spiritualist in order to safely take you home. Ohh, he would do such a thing for the woman he loves without regard for his own safety..... He truly is a courageous gentleman.”

Like I said, that’s not right.

It was true that he was coercive and fickle.

Lydia, who was a fairy doctor, was needed in order for him to continue to be the Earl of Ibrazel.

And yet, he would go to any lengths to protect the people he needs. He wouldn’t spare any compensation in order for those who work for him to do their jobs with warm content.

If I was to build up a relationship of trust as an ally or friend, then Edgar would respond without thought for his own life.

Why he treats Lydia as special, and why he tries to make her his fiancée is in

order to secure her help into the future.

And that wasn't just for show, but he was real about it, so it was difficult to deal with.

Even if it wasn't true feelings of love, he was seriously trying to have her stay by his side all her life. In order for that to happen, he was thinking that marriage was the best and surest way to do that.

But that was a feeling that was difficult for Lydia to understand. It was just too self-centered and forceful.

Edgar might be thinking that there would no woman that would refuse to marry him, but Lydia only felt like her feelings were being ignored.

Because if she were to marry, she was thinking she wanted it to be someone who both of them would feel love for each other, just like her father and mother.

"I'm so envious that you're being loved by a fabulous man like that."

It seemed like Suzy seriously thought so.

It was his specialty to make young women foster good feelings about him.

Lydia grew more and more furious about Edgar.

Opposite of that, Mrs. Collins was in a terrifically good mood.

In result of Oscar imposing everyone to stay silent about last night's incident, the servants were very loyal and kept their mouths shut.

She was smiling like she was having a fabulous time like she had nothing to worry about.

"Oh, Teresa, wasn't all of the guests fabulous gentlemen?"

"Yes, I think so, Mother."

As the two of them were having breakfast together, Lydia was imaging how she was going to need to pretend like she and Edgar were deeply in love with each other and that made her melancholy.

She was prepared to make him agree to annul their engagement. And yet, on the contrary, she now needed to act like the two of them were in an intimate relationship.

She did have feelings of anger and irritation towards Edgar, but in a logical sense, she still was aware that his idea needed to be prioritized in this situation.

“I hear that at last night’s dinner, you had a lively conversation with Earl Ashenbert? You might not be able to go on that boat trip today, but would you like to go out to the shore later on?”

If she were to go on an outing with the fake earl, she wondered if Edgar would be jealous. But Lydia panicked at herself for even thinking something like that for even a second.

She wouldn’t be happy at all if he were to be jealous for her what so ever. Yes, she wouldn’t be happy.

What was important right now was that they didn’t make any openings or weakness for the enemy. This wasn’t the time for her to be thinking about something so stupid.

“Um, Mother, I would like to start courting the Viscount, Lord Middleworth,” said Lydia boldly.

“Oh, with the viscount? He is indeed a fine, handsome gentleman, but you might want to spend more time and make your decision after you learn what kind of people all other men are?”

She swiftly shook her head. If she didn’t get carried by on her enthusiasm, then her feelings of distrust towards Edgar that she had been feeling since last night might interfere.

“It.....it looks like the both of us have fallen in love with each other at first sight. We had a conversation after the dinner, and the viscount said that this was a fated meeting himself, and I also had the same feelings. I don’t think I’ll ever have a love like this.”

She realized that her words weren’t from the heart as she talked because she was repeating what was written on the letter that Edgar had wrote to her this morning.

If he were to have written and sent her that letter with that in mind, then he surely was an unbelievable man.

“Oh, my goodness....., you’re in love with him that much?”

“He had said that he wanted to have a straight talk to you about this. He said he would come here sometime around after our meal.”

She inspected Mrs. Collins’ expression. Lydia grew nervous as she saw that the

lady looked like she didn't know how to respond.

What if she opposes?

But then she was flustered at why she would worry about that when they weren't really in a relationship. Most likely, Lydia wasn't able to imagine what a parent would feel or how they would react in this sort of situation.

"Then, he should be coming pretty soon," said Mrs. Collins who glanced over to the clock stand. At just the perfect timing, Suzy came into the morning room and asked them if she could lead the viscount in.

Edgar appeared after a little while, and although he dressed plainly without decorating or putting on airs, it was apparent that he paid attention to detail, to every hair on his head so that he could give a faithful and sincere impression.

Mrs. Collins offered him a seat, but Edgar wanted her to first listen to his story and in a casual manner sat down next to Lydia.

"I would like to ask of your permission for me to court your daughter. Of course, with marriage in mind."

"Oh, well, Lord Viscount, I did send out the invitations with the hope that one of you would marry my daughter. And if you would say that...."

She might have mumbled her words because she might have preferred the fake earl more.

Lydia became worried, but Mrs. Collins opened her mouth to say something unexpected.

"It may be embarrassing for me to say such a thing at a time like this, but would you truly wish for my daughter's hand in marriage?"

It was the lady of the house that brought up this marriage match with the goal of buying a noble's title with a dowry. But she had been worrying if her daughter would be loved more than anything else.

Mrs. Collins' eyes weren't like usual, flying unsteadily around the room, as she was trying to determine if he was thinking of her daughter as a tool to exchange money with and were firmly fixed on Edgar.

"It is true that my family is not well-to-do. And it is true that was why I participated in the spiritual ritual, but right now, I would gladly welcome her just by herself."

It was an act full of lies that Edgar specialized at, and Lydia, who was also taking a part in the act of being deeply in love with each other, was also full of lies. And yet, for some odd reason, she was so nervous and standing in her place as her heart was racing.

She was probably picturing Mrs. Collins like she was her mother, and could be imagining how it might be if her mother was still alive.

If it was Lydia's mother, she was wondering how she would feel with Edgar in front of her.

She wondered if it was a mother's eye when, like Mrs. Collins, she would try to determine if the man had feelings that he truly loved her daughter.

"May I trust you in that?"

"If I were to be opposed by you, then I'll slay her and run away."

When Edgar said something like that in a joking way, Mrs. Collins also loosened the muscles in her cheeks.

And then, she softly hugged Lydia.

"I'm so happy for you, congratulations."

At that moment, Lydia felt like she really was hugged by her mother and was under the strange feeling like her mother had accepted Edgar.

It was like her mother said that it would be all right to trust Edgar who Lydia couldn't trust at all.

Even if her mother knew of all the lies that he made till now, and that he was the kind of person who will continue to make lies, she felt like her mother said to her that you shouldn't decide that even his proposal was a lie?

Could that be so, she wondered.

But I can't figure that out.

But don't you want to believe in him?

When Lydia left the room with Edgar, Mrs. Collins made a satisfied face as she sat down in her chair.

"Madam, this surely is wonderful."

"Oh, yes, Suzy. The weight has gone off my shoulders. If that girl is happy, then I don't have anything I have to worry about."

As she smiled, she closed her eyes like she was thinking about something. Suzy

felt relieved from the bottom of her heart at how she looked like she was released from the pain and suffering of losing her daughter.

“Oh, yes, Suzy, there still was something else I needed to do. I have to marry you off.”

“Oh, me? Oh, no, I plan to take care of ma’am from now on.”

“You are even like a daughter to me. I thank you so much for being by my side all this time. I don’t want you to marry feeling ashamed just because you lost your parents as I’m going to make all the preparations in place of your parents, so you have nothing to worry about.”

Both hands of Suzy were held tight and warm, which made her fight so she didn’t cry.

She was her ma’am she cared for so much. That’s why, even though she thought it was an unforgivable act of reviving her daughter Teresa, Suzy wasn’t able to stop her.

But, in the end, it didn’t turn out that Teresa was revived. Even if Teresa’s ghost was transferred onto someone, the girl was Lydia, and so Suzy knew that the viscount had tried to charm and attract Teresa’s affections in order to protect her.

If true, Suzy should have tried to convince Mrs. Collins to not do something like a spiritual ritual for her sake.

“What is the matter, Suzy, don’t cry.”

“I’m sorry,I’m just so happy at madam’s words.”

That was her true feelings as well. But for now, she didn’t know what she should do and quickly left the room.



The spacious front garden of the estate continued off to a grove of mixed trees and down to the seashore.

Edgar, who invited Lydia to take a walk, slowly walked down the small path that cut through cypress trees.

The fog was thick but there were no signs that rain was going to fall. The damp sea breezes periodically shook the tree leaves and that noise mixed along with the unnatural sound of the sea waves, which made it feel like a notice before a

storm.

"How strange. Mothers are happy when it's the marriage of their daughter," said Lydia quietly, as she was still carrying the warm and fuzzy feeling from the act they were just doing.

"Of course they would be."

"But Father seems like he doesn't want to think about it."

"Well, fathers, yes. But don't worry, I'll convince him. Don't you think it's about time he let him know?"

"NO."

She told that to him so many times, but Edgar only let that go by with a grin.

"It would be all right as long as we show him that we are deeply in love with each other that we can't stay away from each other."

"That was just an act!"

When she said that, guilt started to bubble up inside Lydia.

".....We are deceiving Mrs. Collins, aren't we. She just believed that Teresa will be happy if she were to marry you."

"That ghost isn't Teresa. That's why, either way, it won't be like the madam's wish is going to come true."

"Eh, what do you mean?"

Surprised, Lydia looked up to the side of his face.

"The needlework she did on her handkerchief had the initial M. And besides, do you think that a daughter who passed away at five years old would be able to do needlework just because she thought it up. Lydia, are you good at needlework?"

"Umm....., I was taught by my grandmother."

"Most likely, the ghost that was called out was a different girl than Teresa who was good at needlework."

I never said that I wasn't good at it.

"Ghosts don't remember about their life before death. I heard from someone who was an expert in that area, but in the land of the dead, souls are able to stay at any age they like unrelated to the age they died at, but if that were so, then wouldn't that mean that the ghost that the spiritualist called out could be

anyone?"

Edgar stopped at the bottom of a particularly tall cypress tree and turned over to face Lydia.

"If there was something that we could do, then it would be to stop Prince's scheme and put everything back to normal. The soul of the deal back to the land of dead, and you back to me. There's nothing for you to be worried about," he said, cajoling her as he made a smile.

Lydia made a step back because she had a small feeling of irritation.

Because she remembered the smile he showed Teresa last night. At the same time, the irritated, angry emotions towards Edgar resurfaced inside her.

"I'm not your possession."

"You're my fiancée."

"You don't have to say that at every opportunity."

"I'll keep on saying it. Once you get used to it, then you'll start to think it could have been so."

I would never!

Shouldn't I trust him? I would do no such thing.

As she remained confused, Lydia took another step back.

"I don't want to have a marriage where there's no love."

Like she knew what a real love was like, as it sounded like the lines of a child who heard it from somewhere.

She was irritated herself, so Edgar must have thought she was living in a dream.

"What, do you think that's hilarious?"

"No, it isn't."

"You laughed, in your heart."

"You're being paranoid."

"But you can live perfectly well without love."

"Does that mean there isn't any love on your side? It's all right; you'll be able to love in no time."

I don't know where that confidence comes from.

"There isn't any from you either. I had a nice inspection of how you seduced Teresa last night. It really is so easy for you to make a girl fall into your hands

and do as you say. You can say whatever you like that you don't mean what so ever, and use any forceful means....."

There was a small moment where she hesitated.

"Do you perhaps, have consciousness even while you're possessed by Teresa?"

"Yes, it seems if I try really hard, I'm able to stay awake. That's what happened last night."

Hmmm, he replied, putting his hand on his forehead. It wasn't like he was troubled, but just a pose he was taking.

"You see, Lydia, I was just doing for your sake,"

"I know that. It's for the sake of my well-fare."

"Then please don't be upset."

"It's not like I'm upset."

Lydia turned her head away and walked off.

"I feel like you're angry."

"If I were to be angry, then it's because you took the liberty of touching my hair and face and shoulder and back!"

"But you also threw yourself into my arms...."

"Stop it! That wasn't me!"

"Then it wasn't you who I touched."

Oh, I see, then you can treat anyone as your lover.

Lydia took her steps faster as she grew more furious.

"No, it was more like, I was thinking it was you. I was so happy that you didn't run away and looked back into my eyes, so it was like I didn't want to let you go."

"I.....If it was me, I would have hit you."

She knew that she was turning bright red from embarrassment herself, and she kept her back to Edgar, with her head down as she continued to walk.

"I thought so. I wanted to try other things while I wouldn't be hit."

Do what?

"I'm glad I reframed myself."

"....."

"Or, should I have not held back? Oh, I know, if we went to the very limit to our

relationship, then that might convince you that all that's left for you is to marry me."

"I would never be convinced!"

"But, it could have been a chance for us to become intimate. If it were Teresa, she wouldn't run off. But with you, you have your own consciousness. If we spend a romantic time together, then you might come to understand my feelings not just with your mind but also your body."

B-b-body?

Blood rushed to Lydia's head which made her stopped in her tracks.

"In your head, you have a certain conviction about what like and love is. Even if I say that I'm serious about you, since it isn't just like how you imagined, you won't believe me, but you really are special to me."

"Stop it, this isn't the time to be joking! I will not forgive you if you do as you please to do something improper!"

Lydia faced him as she protested at him in a serious manner, but he only gave her an insolent and arrogant smile.

"Then, let's test it right now."

"Huh?"

"I think you'll be able to near the feelings between lovers."

The wind from the sea blew up against Lydia's back. Her hair that was let down loose flew to the sides and they got in the way of Lydia's sight and she rushed to try and hold her hair down.

Then, she felt a warm hand touch her cheek. When she looked up, right in front of her was Edgar's ash mauve eyes.

He looked at her with slightly painful, longing eyes and touched her so soft like she could easily be broken, which made her feel like she was someone special, but when she quickly came back to her senses, she was able to realize that that wasn't possible.

He looked with the same kind of eyes at Lydia, no Teresa last night.

She knew she had to run, but she wasn't able to move at all, and just when she thought she might actually want this, Lydia fell into complete hatred for herself. Oh, my goodness, was I a woman with such loose morals?

“Close your eyes.”

She couldn't fight back against his gentle voice which sounded like a spell.

“I love you. I really do.”

She could nearly take that seriously. If she were to believe him, then something might change. Even if she thought that, from the bottom of Lydia's heart, there was a voice that rose out in denial.

“You're lying.”

“Please believe me, my kiss than my words,”

“.....But you, even just now, aren't thinking about my feelings at all.”

Oh, that's right. He always does as he pleases and tries to make things go as he wants.

That's why she keeps holding her own ground.

Lydia gently opened up her eyes. Edgar had narrowed his eyes and appeared a little saddened.

His hand slowly and quietly let go of her. But that wasn't because of what Lydia said, but because he felt a presence in the depths of the grove of trees.

Edgar inspected the shadow of the trees and said “Whose there?”

The shadow of the person swiftly turned around and broke out into a run.

He thought he saw the white face of Ermine that took an instant look towards him.

He had the feeling like it was Ermine dressed in her usual male attire.

“Lydia, return to the house.”

Just saying that, Edgar went followed the shadow in a dash.

The figure that wore a black male coat but definitely had the feminine curve of a woman rushed up the hill. Edgar followed after the person, but had the feeling like he had been lured out.

However, the spiritualist that had been locking herself up and come out on her own. He wanted to make sure if she was really Ermine or not.

Eventually, with the inclined slope of the sea against her back, the woman dressed like a man stopped her run and turned around.

Brown eyes that were close to black looked at him as if they were provoking him. When her shortly-cut hair that had the same color was blown in the wind,

then her silhouette close to her ears was revealed.

She was a woman that Edgar knew well.

She had the gallant and chivalrous facial features that went well with male clothes. But she still had the feminine shine that could only bring the description of a beautiful woman to one's mind. Even if she had covered herself in male clothing, one could tell at one look that she was a woman and Edgar walked slowly over to her direction.

"Lord Edgar."

From her red lips, a familiar voice to his ears was spun out.

"It has been a long time."

"Ermine, if you had survived then why didn't you return by my side."

"I, right now, am the servant of Ulysses. I cannot go against his will."

"Because you were saved by him?"

For an instant, she lowered her eyes. She didn't respond to Edgar's question.

"I see that you are still with Miss. Carlton since then. It may be a ridiculous thing for me to say, but when I found out that she was safe and alive and that she was giving you her hand, I was relieved."

"Lydia had also been worried about you."

"I had done such a horrible thing to her as well. And yet, would she forgive me."

"She had even forgiven me even though I was deceiving her."

The expression she made in an instant where she loosened the corners of her lips was Ermine herself.

"Lord Edgar, ever since you brought back Miss Carlton without harming her, I had a feeling like something was going to change. She was so honest and had such passionate devotion and is so kind and soft-hearted that it could amaze you. If there was someone who could save you, then I thought it would be someone like her."

The woman in front of him knew things that only Ermine would know.

He wondered if she really was Ermine. He was still half in doubt, but at the same time he wanted her to be her.

"Ermine, there is no need for you to serve under Ulysses. Please return to my side."

“Are you saying you’ll trust a traitor?”

“I know that your heart doesn’t hold any feelings of betrayal towards me.”

Prince was the one who used the weakness of her heart that had feelings for Edgar and used it for his advantage.

“What my true heart holds isn’t the problem right now. I was given the order to kill you.”

“Kill me, huh.”

He didn’t feel any malice from her at all.

She was so swift and fast in her movements and had a light frame of body and experienced with weapons, so if she felt like it, it would be possible for her to kill Edgar.

However, he walked up to her even further.

“Prince has given up his hope for you. It is too late now; you have become too famous as an England Earl. If you cannot serve him any use, then I was told to torture and give you pain through and through and then kill you...”

The hand that she lifted up was gripping a pistol.

Edgar didn’t pay any attention to that and reached his arm out to touch Ermine. Just when his hand reached up to her ear, she flinched for an instant. He didn’t let that instant go to waste and grabbed ahold of her arm. The aim of her pistol went off and the bullet cut the top of the grass.

Like he thought, he couldn’t feel any determination from her.

He ripped the pistol away from her, and pushed her down to the grass and Edgar looked down at her as he took his hand to her shirt.

“I’m sorry, for this.”

She realized what he was going to do, but he didn’t give her any opening to sit up and opened of the buttons of her shirt.

The brand of a slave that was painfully burned onto her white skin was nowhere to be seen.

It was something that should have been on Ermine.

“Who in the world are you?”

Instead of a reply, she pointed a knife at Edgar’s throat.

“Why do you talk like you know everything about Ermine?”

She frowned with her eyebrows as she put strength in her arms. Backing away from the knife, Edgar let her go.

She lifted herself up and swiftly stood up and attacked him.

This time she was serious. It was a malice that had sadness mixed in it.

Perhaps the secret that Edgar just found out right now was something that could have painfully tormented her.

She carried out an attack one after another like she was trying to send him to his grave along with herself that had no brand which was burned into Edgar's eyes.

If she were to be in dismay about being an imposter, then he wondered what that meant.

Even if he wanted to fight back, even her movements of how she handled a weapon was so alike with Ermine. To Edgar, she was a friend and ally that he didn't want to lose once more.

Just then, there was a dark shadow that cut in between her and Edgar.

Going against a woman who looked exactly alike his sister, Raven didn't hesitate at all in holding out his knife ready for attack.

"Wait.....Raven."

Edgar tried to stop him, but the woman slashed out with her knife first.



It was a life-sacrificing act to go out against Raven. If it was a woman who knew about Ermine, then she should have known that there would be no one who could win against Raven one-on-one.

However, it was too late, as a highly-charged malicious atmosphere was awakening inside Raven. If it was to protect his master, then the spirit that would turn to a cold-blooded and brutal demon was taking control over him.

Raven, who had an immeasurable high level of combat skills, set out with just the intent of killing his enemy.

He had spent no effort in avoiding the blade of her weapon and threw down his knife which sank itself deep into her shoulder.

The woman wobbled back weakly. She tried to build a distance between them.

The woman stepped back to the very edge of the steep slope that stuck out over the sea, and then her foot caught on one of the rocks and she went down on one knee. Her face twisted in pain as she tried to pull out the knife.

Raven didn't change his expression at all and when he walked over to her, he reached out his arm.

It was a slender arm of a young man, but it was surely able to snap a human neck in an instant.

"Stop it!"

Edgar ran over to her so that he could help her up.

"That's enough; you don't have to kill her."

However, at that time it was too late, as even Edgar's orders didn't reach Raven's ears.

Raven didn't show any emotions and yet at the same time, he carefully avoided Edgar and reached out to her.

At that time, for some reason, Raven's movement stopped.

"Please stop..."

It was Lydia. She had her arms wrapped around Raven to try to stop him.

Oh, no, thought Edgar. It was difficult for even Edgar to try and stop Raven. There was no way that Lydia could do it.

And there were many cases when Raven, when he was ready for combat to not be able to tell the difference between his enemies and allies.

He tried to move as quickly as possible to protect Lydia, but it was too late. Raven shook and tore off her arm without going easy on her what-so-ever that sent the flying Lydia slamming down into the slope.

The one who reached her arm out to her as she was close to tumbling down the slope was the woman who looked just like Ermine.

She wasn't able to support her completely and so the both of them went tumbling down the slope. However, the woman held Lydia as if she was protecting her from the rocks that they came in contact with periodically as they poked out of the ground.

When they finally managed to stop near the middle of the slope, the woman wobbled up onto her feet.

Edgar rushed over to Lydia who still was lying on the ground. The woman slid down the slope trying to escape from them and disappeared from the coastal cliffs to the grove of trees.

Lydia had just gone through a slight concussion to the head and she awoke from being unconscious as she was being carried by Edgar into the estate, but since she was in such an embarrassing state, she pretended to still be asleep.

She was laid down onto a bed, and she could sense that he was peering down at her worryingly and didn't seem like he was going to go, so she opened her eyes as casually as she could.

"Lydia, are you all right? Can you tell who I am?"

".....Yes."

"Oh, you shouldn't move so soon. You had hit your head."

"I'm fine, there's nothing wrong with me."

It wasn't calming to remain on her side, so she slowly sat up. It seemed like he offered his hand out to help her, but he must have noticed that she help but flinch and unexpectedly was quick to back down.

It was because she just remembered how she was nearly kissed by him earlier. But it wasn't because of her guard towards Edgar, but because Lydia didn't have any faith in herself as she might have actually accepted it.

There was no way that she could allow the kiss from a frivolous man like him, no way.

What if she felt like that again. And when she became worried like that, her heartbeat increased rapidly and Lydia took deep breathes.

"I'm terribly sorry, Miss. Carlton."

Raven was standing straight right behind Edgar, and said his apology with his head titled down. For him who didn't normally show any emotions, he appeared like he was quite depressed.

"Don't worry about it. It was my fault for sticking my head in someone else's business."

"I made a fetal mistake."

"You don't have to exaggerate...."

"I have every intention of accepting any kind of punishment."

It seemed like Raven was serious.

"Your duty is to protect Edgar, so you don't have to drive yourself into a corner about me."

"No, it is not something to be excused to cause you any injuries who will become the future wife of my lord."

Wife? Lydia made a furrow in between her brows and looked over at Edgar.

"Wait, Edgar, did you say that to Raven?"

"Well, of course, I would need to let my most trusted valet know about this."

"Look at him, he's taken it completely seriously!"

"It's naturally since I am serious."

He is going to any lengths to seriously say that.

Because of that, Raven is anxious and worried sick.

".....Anyways, you tell himself yourself that he shouldn't worry himself."

"He doesn't seem to be convinced. That's why, yes, could you hit him once yourself. Then I think he would be satisfied."

"I-I couldn't possibly hit him!"

"I'm always close to being hit."

"That's because you always making a joke of everything!"

"Raven, you should try and do some sort of joke. And then, just like you wish, Lydia says she would hit you."

Wh-whaaat?!

“Some sort of joke, my lord?”

“Like a kiss.”

She wasn't able to figure out how Raven, who was the especially serious type, took in Edgar's practical joke and when Lydia timidly turned her head eerily over towards to Raven, she met his eyes which were looking straight at her.

Lydia went stiff from nervousness, but after some time, Raven drooped his shoulders like it was out of his hands.

“I cannot, Lord Edgar. Please forgive me.”

“All right. But instead, you need to give up on your punishment.”

With a sigh, he replied “Yes, I understand.” She wanted to say why they would come to that, but regardless, it seemed like Edgar was able to make the stubborn Raven withdraw.

“And, so, Lydia, are you hurt anywhere? Is there anywhere that hurts?”

As she shook her head, Lydia noticed that there was some sort of sparkling grain of sand stuck on her hair.

She wondered if it was because she fell down. But it looked like fine glass beads and was light blue and too clear to be called sand.

“It looks like I don't have a scratch on me. It's probably because Ermine had protected me. Even though she was the one who had the more worse injury.”

“She wasn't my sister. She tried to kill Lord Edgar,” said Raven in a definite tone. Because it was Ermine who ran into betrayal because of her feelings towards Edgar, he was saying that she shouldn't be able to end Edgar's life.

Sitting himself down on the edge of the bed, Edgar thought deeply.

“She herself said that she couldn't go against Ulysses. He apparently was ordered by Prince to inflict as much pain on me and then kill me. Instead of just killing me, the woman who looked just like Ermine seemed like she had appeared before me because she was ordered to do so.”

“So you're saying that she planned to attack you so that she would be the one who gets killed?”

At the arbor in the garden, she had said to the old woman that she was surely going to die.

“She should have been able to foresee that Raven was going to rush to the

scene.”

If it turned to a situation that he was going to let Ermine die. Then Edgar could not go on without blaming himself.

She was unable to rebel against Ulysses and was given the order to attack Edgar and kill him. Even if she was or wasn't the real Ermine, no one would want to witness someone dear to him be used by the enemy and die in front of his eyes again.

If it was for the sake of tormenting him who shouldered the pain of surviving through the sacrifices of so many of his friends, then it truly was a cruel plan.

“No matter what kind of aim they had in attacking you, she wasn't my sister. Lord Edgar, if you pity her, then it's just as the enemies were hoping for.”

“You're right....., there was no brand of a slave that should have been on Ermine.”

What? Thought Lydia and lifted her head. Since Edgar was desperately trying to stop Raven, she had thought that he was convinced that she was the real one.

“Then, why did you try and stop me? At that time, you should have made the final blow.”

“I wonder why.”

Just when she thought that Edgar made a stale, deflated reply like it was someone else's business, then he made a serious frown.

“I was definitely sure that she was Ermine. She knew things that only Ermine would know, and her facial expressions and the habits when she talked, everything else about her, besides the brand, was Ermine.”

“But that brand isn't something that can't be taken away that easily.”

“Mine was taken away.”

That was right. The brand of a slave that was burnt onto Edgar's body was taken away by the merrows.

And then, he asked Lydia a question.

“In my case, it just happened to be so because of special circumstances. I wonder if there could be such a chance for that kind of thing to happen to Ermine as well. And another thing, it's just a strange a mystery that she is alive just as much as the disappearance of her brand.”

Ermine, who fell into the sea of the merrows. Her body wasn't found, but the waves were so rapid and violent that it didn't seem strange for a thing like that to happen.

As Lydia was thinking about that, she focused her attention on the little objects that were sparkling like tiny shades of glass.

Not that she thought about it, Lydia had been cradled by Ermine who was injured, but there wasn't any signs of blood on her.

Not blood, but clear crystal-objects came falling out of her hair and clothes.

But, wait, maybe this was blood?

What if she wasn't a human?

And then she realized something.

Selkies were embodiments of those who died at sea. And so Ermine was.....

"Ermine might be a selkie."

It must have sounded like something completely out-of-the-blue. Edgar and Raven turned to look at each other.

"I have heard that people who died at sea turn into selkies. I don't think it can definitely happen every time, but since the person named Ulysses has the knowledge of a fairy doctor, he might have gone through the trouble and had her revived as a selkie."

"That sort of thing is possible.... Can you do that as well?"

"I don't have any powers to control selkies. But if Ulysses is a powerful fairy doctor, then I think he could have made the selkies search for Ermine's body and made her be brought in as one of their kind>"

Like he was trying to organize what Lydia had said in his head, Edgar pressed his temple.

"Are seal fairies able to transform back into the form when they were human? Would they have their memories?"

"I think there were instances like that. A fisher who had died at sea had arrived back at his house, but since he was a selkie, he would bid farewell to his family and return to the sea. Humans who become the residents of the fairy realm would come to forget about the human world, but Ermine is still,"

"Since she just became a selkie, then she still has her human memories," he

whispered with a difficult expression.

“Lydia, if it were like you are imagining, then why does she, as well as the other selkies, have to submit to the wishes of Ulysses?”

“That’s because their selkie coats had been hidden. Selkies take off their coats to turn into their human form. But if they don’t have their coats, they can’t return to the sea, and are left to do the biddings of the person who had hidden their coat and knows where it is. Since their coats are like their souls.”

“Then, as long as we’re able to find the coats that he has hidden, there the situation of Ermine being held under control would end.”

“That’s....”

Lydia held back on her answer, because if she still had the memories of when she was a human, Lydia was worried if she might still be carrying the after effects of being under the influence of Prince.

Of course, Edgar, and Raven too, must have that thought as well.

“If she was forced to return as a fairy, then my sister has indeed died. The one who is here is the servant of Ulysses, and even if the control over her was taken away, she is only an existence that was revived as Prince’s tool.”

At Raven’s words, Edgar let out a deep sigh.

“Most likely, it’s just as you say. But, Raven, she’s your sister.”

Even if he was told that, Raven only tilted his head like that was mystery to him. Even if he understood the words of being a family, he didn’t know what kind of feelings he should have.

Of course, Raven cared for Ermine as his sister. But after she had betrayed Edgar, and as long as she was an existence who might continue to be a danger, then more than being a sister, she was an enemy.

However, Edgar was thinking about the feelings of Ermine than her betrayal. If she was still under the curse of Prince, then he wanted to rescue her out of there.

“She isn’t my sister.”

“Because she isn’t human? Haven’t you ever thought that you would like to meet those you lost even if it was a dream? Even if it was a ghost or anything else, have you ever wished that you could exchange words with that person one

more time?”

Most likely, it wasn't like that for Raven.

Because he possessed such a specially high combat skills, he grew up as a man-killing tool, and wasn't able to develop feelings as a human being, was finally able to open up his heart only to Edgar.

Even if he was beginning to show consideration and think about the people who were around Edgar, it was still difficult for Raven to understand the feelings towards those who passed away and why those left behind cling onto them.

And yet, Edgar still continued to speak like he tried to talk him into it.

“I wanted to meet Ermine. I don't care what kind of situation, and even if she hated me, I wanted to see her.”

That was the same feelings that Mrs. Collins had that made her call back the ghost of her daughter. It was the same how Lydia felt towards her mother.

If she was able to see her one more time. Since Lydia could understand those feelings that one couldn't help but wish for, she wasn't able to hate Mrs. Collins.

“Ermine had saved me. It wasn't like she was ordered to do so, and yet she saved me by her own decision. I think that her heart still stands in a position where she is your friend and ally.”

Raven fell silent like he was still undecided. Edgar was silent as well.

When everything turned silent so quickly, there was a small sound that came from outside the door. The three of them that were in the room immediately turned their attention to that.

Someone was eavesdropping?

Just when they thought that, Lydia felt a cold shiver run up her spine, and cradled her arms in a crouch.

“What's the matter, Lydia.”

“I just feel a little unwell...”

She started to have difficulty breathing and cold sweat started to sweep out of her.

As she watched as Raven stepped over to the door without making any sound, Lydia thought that this was just like last night.

Teresa was writhing in painful agony. That was the only thing she could figure out.

“No...., help me....”

Edgar took and held Lydia’s hand which she was left to hold herself with.

“It’s all right, I’m here with you.”

“It’s Teresa, ...she’s remembering about the time she was dying....”

Raven opened the door with great force. But he remained standing in that spot.

“Was there someone there.”

“No. But the person might have heard what we were talking about.”

As she heard those words, Lydia lost her consciousness.

Chapter 5 - Just a little more to fall in love

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Written by Mizue Tani, illustration by Asako Takaboshi

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Waiting for the low tide at night, Raven departed for town.

The sea was violent as usual, and there were waves that endlessly washed up onto the path like they would take out one's feet. It was even more dangerous in the darkness of night to cross the thin path, but apparently a member of the 'Scarlet Moon' had come all the way to the town with valuable information. Raven didn't hesitate in saying that he would go.

"I will return tomorrow morning. Lord Edgar, please be careful."

"If they wanted to torture me in pain, then the enemies would use a slow and gradual method, so I'll be fine."

He said that and saw Raven off, but of course, there were still things that they needed to be cautious about even now.

More than anything, if Lydia wasn't possessed by Teresa constantly, then there was a chance that the enemy would have noticed them.

"Oi, Earl, Lydia isn't waking up at all. What is going on," said Nico who appeared in the room.

"Now is the time for Teresa. If the cause of this was because of Teresa's fear,

then she should be waking up pretty soon.”

“What do you mean Teresa’s fear?”

“It seems like when she remembers the time she died, that directly links to deplete Lydia’s energy and nerves.”

Like he was undecided, Nico crossed his arms as he stood on his hind feet.

“Hey, now, you have to do something about that. It’s awful to let Lydia have to go through the same experience of that kind of fear.”

That was absolutely true.

But, wait a minute, thought Edgar. If Teresa had remembered about when she had died, then the trigger for that was last night’s incident. No, it wasn’t the incident itself, but what happened after it. He wondered what it was that she found and what she felt.

He came to the thought that maybe she could have been killed by Ulysses. And if he played her up to become the ghost of Teresa, then she must have felt Ulysses’ presence sometime during the incident yesterday.

“Nico, there might be a possibility that the person who killed Teresa is the mastermind behind all of this. If she could remember something, then we would be able to make the first move.”

Edgar stood up and tried to head out of the room.

Hold on, said Nico as he stood in front him, blocking his path.

“You aren’t planning on having her remember, are you? Even if Teresa was possessing her, Lydia could be awake as well, you know.”

He might be putting Lydia through the pain of being killed.

“But, at this rate, Lydia will be put in danger. There is no guarantee that I can protect her through it.”

He picked up Nico who was trying to stop him and threw him aside.

“Whoa, hey, stop it! You really aren’t thinking about Lydia! Everything won’t be all right if you just are able to protect her life!”

He had every intention of thinking about Lydia’s sake. And yet, Nico, and even Lydia, would say to him that ‘you don’t try to understand my feelings.’

Was that so? Isn’t protecting one’s life the most prioritizing thing? If you can’t protect your life, then you can’t say anything about what one is feeling.

Making his mind, Edgar headed to Teresa's room.



My body hurts. I can't breathe.

In complete blackness, the more and more she tried to struggle, muddy water came gushing into her nose and mouth.

Help me. But she couldn't make any sound.

She just spitted out the rest of the air that remained in her lungs. In place of that, she swallowed a heavy amount of mud water and her body sunk down even further.

She was filled with the water that spilled into her, and just at the moment she felt her body was going to explode, Lydia sprung up in her bed.

"Miss, are you all right? Miss Teresa."

Suzy came rushing over to her, and stroked Lydia's back as she coughed.

She still wasn't able to get out of the nightmare, and the one who whispered "Help me....." wasn't Lydia, but Teresa.

It looked like it was night already, and although Lydia did wake up, she was in a condition where she could only remain still.

"You must have had a bad dream. But, if you have woken up, then that's better. Ever since you felt sick during the day, you remained asleep, so the Lord Viscount was also worried."

When Teresa finally lifted her head, her eyes saw that there was Edgar.

"I was so worried, Teresa."

"Lord Viscount....."

I'm so happy, she said and opened her arms out any worries.

Oh, my goodness, and I'm still in my nightwear! Thought Lydia as she became nervous from being softly embraced by his arms.

"I wonder what happened to me. I was just so restless, I couldn't stand it. And I was so terrified for some unknown reason, and I couldn't stop trembling.... Oh, please stay by my side."

Oh, lord, what are you doing.

“It’s all right, I’m here.”

You don’t have to be.

“I knew that it was improper to remain in a woman’s room at such a late hour, but I was so worried that I pleaded with Suzy. And the incident from last night hasn’t been solved either.”

Suzy, who was standing a few steps back, nodded in agreement, which showed that she had come to completely trust Edgar. That probably could have been because she found out that he was lovers with Lydia and that she completely believed that Edgar was a faithful gentleman.

But that isn’t true! Was what Lydia wanted to object right now, but she couldn’t do that.

“Uh, so, I will be excusing myself, but if there is anything you need, please call for me.”

What, you’re leaving me alone with him?

Lydia panicked, but Suzy only bowed her head and quickly rushed out to the small room for maids.

It was a place strictly for her personal maid, that was right next to hers beyond a door. But even though, it was just the two of them in her bed chamber, and Edgar was sitting down on the edge of the bed and Teresa had completely surrendered her body up against him.

If you do anything, I’ll clobber you, she thought, but even her left hand that she was just barely able to move had been moved by Teresa and was now resting around on his back, so she couldn’t do anything.

Just then, Lydia remembered the thing he had said during the day.

Oh, no, was this man seriously going to do something out of bounds so that he could make us established so that I won’t be able to annul our engagement.....

But Edgar spoke up to say something that was completely different from what Lydia was worried about.

“What kind of dream did you see?”

“A dream where my body was sinking in water.”

“Why would you have a dream like that?”

“Probably because I had died from drowning in water.”

Just remembering that, Lydia was starting to feel suffocated again.

“Is there anything else you remember?”

Teresa turned her head up like she didn’t understand his question.

“Why would you ask something like that?”

“I want to know all there is about you. And so that I can feel the reality of this miracle of being able to meet you even after you had died once.”

It seemed like Teresa had accepted his answer without any doubt, but Lydia naturally tried to guess what his true intentions were.

It seemed like Edgar wanted to know about the time when Teresa had died.

He had said something like she wasn’t the daughter of Mrs. Collins. Which means, the question of what was the reason behind staging up another person’s soul as Teresa’s.

Like it was impossible to call back the real soul of Teresa, and so it was needed to get one’s hands on someone’s soul who had just died.

“Someone else’s.....? That’s right, there was someone there, watching me as I was sinking down....”

If that were true, then it would mean she was killed in order to trick the mother of this house.

Chills went down her spine. Cold sweat seeped out of her. And yet, Teresa continued on with her story.

“I think it was a man. But on one of his ears, he was wearing something that shined..., a small gemstone?”

“Teresa, is this suffering for you?”

“Oh, no, I’m fine.”

“But, you look like you’re in pain.”

He’s right, this hurts, so stop.....

“Yes, it is a little constraining, my body does feel strained, but I’m not in that much pain,”

What, ...wait, what does that mean?

“Maybe because it hasn’t been that long since I returned to life. It feels like I haven’t fully become attached or used to my living body. That’s why, when I feel sick or when I can’t move, I just feel have a dizzy sense of my condition.”

Hold on a moment, so the only one in pain is me?

Now that she thought about it, this was Lydia's body.

Even if the cause of it was Teresa's memory, it might mean that the one to completely take on the sickness of health was Lydia.

"Then, would you like to try and remember some more?"

You have to be joking. I'm already suffering this much! Was what she was screaming inside herself, but even if he were to notice, this was Edgar. He was sure to not stop in pulling out useful memories from Teresa.

Teresa was recalling about the muddy water. Just only that, Lydia felt like bitter water was spewing down her throat, and she coughed heavily.

"You don't have to hurry. Just slowly remember."

Oh, someone stop this, I don't want this pain to go on.

".....Oh, I know, I was on top of a bridge. I was watching ripples on the surface of the water. And then suddenly, I was pushed over by someone from behind me.... When I was falling down, I heard that person say something.A sacrifice, for His Highness Prince.... Or something like that...."

Why am I the only one who has to go through such torture like this?

Lydia made a fist with her left hand as hard as she could.

That hand had been resting itself on Edgar's arm, but Lydia didn't realize that, as she sank her nails down, trying to fight against the pain she was feeling.

He must have felt pain, as Edgar made a small frown.

However, Teresa didn't notice and she didn't pay any attention. Her body was trembling, but her voice didn't give out any signs of pain or hurt.

"He was smiling.I was so scared....."

At that moment, Edgar realized what was going on, and quickly put his hand over Lydia's.

"Teresa, let's take a rest."

She looked up at him as if asking him why.

"I'm still fine."

I can't take it anymore.

"No, this is enough."

"I want you to know more about me."

“No. It seems like there is more damage to your body than you feel.”

She must have been convinced, as Teresa stopped trying to remember anymore, and Lydia was finally released from the tortuous pain she was in.

As her body went limp from exhaustion and she was taking heavy breaths, Edgar held on her left hand tightly and pressed it against his cheek.

“I’m sorry.....”

She knew he was saying that to Lydia.

He must have realized that her left hand was connected to Lydia’s consciousness. He appeared like he was worried about her, but to her who was completely exhausted, she only thought ‘what do you mean I’m sorry.’

In the first place, Edgar would just say a light ‘sorry’ as he would use someone in every way he could.

Lydia wanted to say ‘don’t touch me’ but once she was cradled in his arms, there was nothing she could do to fight back.

Teresa was surrendering herself like she had grown completely relaxed.

“You’re so kind.I have a feeling like I’ve never been this thought for by someone before.”

“No such thing would happen to someone like you.”

“Oh, no, I just have a sense about that. People thought I was stupid. There were quite some people I had met, but none of them would seriously trying to get to know me. I knew that, but I just wanted to believe that I was attractive and popular...”

“That’s what you remember?”

“Yes, it might be what happened before I died.Lord Viscount, you’re so kind, so even if you’re after money, I’m fine even if you are just pretending to be in love with me. I’m happy if you would continue pretending to be nice to me, so that I can continue to like you. I won’t wish for your heart.”

Lydia was listening to their conversation with a dazed mind, but that made her heart skip a beat.

Could she have vaguely noticed Edgar’s lie. Could she have been aware that he wasn’t serious?

But, Lydia thought her answer was the complete opposite of hers.

Teresa was honest with her feelings. Lydia didn't focus on how Edgar felt, but she wanted to distance herself from him because he wasn't serious.

If Edgar was serious, then would she be able to fall in love with him. If he wasn't serious, then she wondered if she would absolutely not fall for him.

She didn't have an answer, and yet she blamed everything on Edgar.

"Why do you think that I'm pretending in loving you?"

"Because you don't try to kiss me."

"You shouldn't trust a man who would kiss you so easily."

That would mean you from earlier this day.

"You're right. You're absolutely right."

"Either way, you're not going to believe me."

"Then, give me a kiss that you won't give so easily."

What, wait....

As the both of them looked at each other closely, Teresa managed to somehow put strength in herself and wrapped her arms around his neck.

No, stop it, whispered Lydia.

Don't kiss me as you please.

Don't kiss Teresa in front of my eyes.

She didn't know which one she didn't want.

But she didn't want it. Neither one.

From the bottom of her ears, she felt two warm hands hold her cheek.

"My fairy."

That was what Edgar would call Lydia. She normally thought that it was overly-sweet and too embarrassing and someone hurry up and do something about him, but Lydia realized that he was talking to her straightly so that Teresa wouldn't notice, and although she was tired and slumped down, her heart started to beat oddly fast.

"Even if I meant it from my heart, it would be difficult for me now to be trusted by you."

Teresa remained silent. There was no way that she could realize that those weren't words that were meant for her, but she might have felt she was in a distant position.

As Lydia was relieved, she thought this was unexpectedly. She thought that Edgar didn't mind if she didn't believe in him and just cared that she would stay by his side. That's why she thought he was putting his energy and focus on piling up more deniable facts like engagement and kissing.

And yet, right now, he was going through the effort of calling out to Lydia and refused the offer from Teresa.

His words that if it wouldn't mean that he wasn't kissing Lydia, then he wouldn't do it.

But, even so, she couldn't believe she was on the verge of believing him.

Especially a man who did as he pleased and used other people selfishly.

".....I feel weary. I think I don't have much strength left."

"You want to lay on your side?"

"Yes....."

Teresa let the strength go out in her arms. Edgar tried to set her down, but suddenly he brought her into his arms again like he was cradling her.

"I want to be like this, just a little longer."

Although he said that, the truth was that Lydia's hand, only her left hand was still clinging onto his sleeve and wouldn't let go.

Lydia didn't know why herself. She thought she wouldn't have such strength left in her, but she didn't want to let go.

I'm sorry, he said again.

Their words and feelings weren't able to communicate well. Lydia was always holding herself backwards and even if she thought that she wanted to step closer to him in the corner of her heart, she wasn't able to act.

But, now, the only thing that was free was her one hand. Since her feelings were concentrating in that, she wasn't able to control it.

For an instant, she felt that if it was this hand, she might be able to touch deep into his heart.

She earnestly wished that she could know that he was really feeling.

And as they were like that, Lydia felt like there were no lies in the arms that were nervously holding Lydia in a more bemused manner than usual.

Until morning arrived, Edgar wasn't able to even take a light nap.

He sank himself into the sofa and had his eyes closed, but in the darkness where all the lights were put out, he couldn't take his attention off of Lydia's breathing.

What was saving was that she didn't have any nightmares and continued to sleep peacefully.

A man who wore a gemstone on the back of his ear. The one who killed Teresa was no doubt, Ulysses. It was only the close subordinates of Prince who called him in the ceremonial manner of His Highness.

It was valuable information, but he was surprisingly down-hearted and his mood depressed from making Lydia go through such pain.

In the room that was starting to light up, he turned over his shirt sleeve to check his skin.

There was light, red lines left on his arm when Lydia had gripped him strongly.

It was an unexpected strength. He was making her bear with that much pain.

He was well aware that she might feel pain, but he did choose to pull out the memory from Teresa.

No matter how much he said that she was special to him, after this it was natural that he couldn't have her believe him. Where in the world is there a man who would do this kind of thing to the woman he cares for.

Lydia said that he didn't think about her feelings, but he was vaguely understanding what she meant.

But, for Edgar, he didn't have any intention of lying to Lydia. Putting aside the fact that she was valuable as a fairy doctor, he thought she was cute, and he wanted her all to himself and wanted to keep her by his side, and if one normally thought about that, you would think that it was feelings of love.

Only, it wasn't like there were not that many women to Edgar. He was aware that it was easy for him to come to like someone. And yet, the reason he proposed to Lydia wasn't because of just a whim of his.

Although it was an idea he thought up at the spur of the moment, he did like her, and there was profit for the both of them and so he thought it wasn't a bad idea.

As he thought that and had his eyes closed, he heard the sound of Lydia waking

up and stirring in her bed sheets.

The sound of her slowly approaching his direction was like she was creeping up to a sleeping lion.

Oh, that's why. Because she would be so cautious, it made him want to joke around. Although that only made her lift up guard up around him, he wanted her to turn her attention towards him even if it was cautiousness.

Like she was making sure he was still asleep, Lydia peered down over at him, but she must have not noticed that the tip of one of her strands of hair was brushing up and tickling the nape of his neck.

The thing that Lydia was looking at was the red finger marks that were left on his arm.

Oh, no....., she groaned as she lowered herself to take a closer look.

The one at fault was Edgar, and yet Lydia was the type who felt guilty from the bottom of her heart.

Because she would lightly touch with her fingers on it, he thought she was so adorable that he could barely restrain himself.

He wanted to hurry up and make her his.

It was easy to steal a kiss from her.

He thought if he were to kiss Teresa, that would be something emotionally unacceptable to Lydia, and so he reframed himself last night.

But right now, it was Lydia. She was close enough in his grasp. She had her guard down completely.

And yet, he didn't know if he should. He might be all too irresponsible and acting in a halfhearted way towards her.

That's why he had put her through a painful experience; and he thought that the gap between them would not shrink even if he were to kiss her and that made him feel unusually weak and discouraged.

If he were to show any hints that he was awake, then she was sure to scamper off in an escape.

She was so close to him, and yet he felt like she was miles away.

He wondered what he was to Lydia.

A suspicious scoundrel, or as the employer of a fairy doctor. He wondered if she at least felt good enough about him to think of him as a friend.

She also said that she didn't want marriage that had no love in it.

Love, huh.

He thought that it wasn't like there wasn't any.....

As he still felt the mark on his arm, Edgar was thinking about that for the first time.

"Miss. Carlton, are you awake?"

It was Suzy's voice. At the same time, Lydia quickly moved away from Edgar's side.

"Yes, what is it, Suzy?"

Feeling like they were interrupted, Edgar moved his head like he had just awoken at the maid's voice.

"Pardon me, Lord Viscount. At such an early hour," she said towards Edgar when she opened the door.

"It's fine,did something happen?"

"Uh, the earl is frantically looking for you."

The earl imposter was yelling on top of his lungs, calling out for Edgar and his whereabouts who was not in his room.

It was an annoyance, not only to Edgar, but to Lydia.

Suzy was the only one who knew that he was in Lydia's room. That's why she shut up the fake earl into the salon and convinced him that she will go and call for the viscount.

Recalling how he was making the same kind of ruckus when the incident happened yesterday evening, made Lydia have a bad feeling. She thought it was best not to get separated, and came along with Edgar.

She rushed to prepare herself, and when the both of them came to the salon, the man came running over to Edgar like he was practically jump himself onto him.

"Lord Viscount! Thank goodness. You're alive. Oh, Teresa, and you as well."

His disturbed and frightened state of being didn't appear like it was an act, but they couldn't be sure.

“What do you mean in alive?”

“Please, save me!”

“You have to calm down and explain to us first.”

“It was Lord Clark this time. Just like last time, his room was made into a mess and I didn’t see his body anywhere.”

Edgar led Lydia to sit down on a chair and he calmly asked his questions.

“And you’re the first person to discover this again?”

“That’s because our rooms were close and I heard noise....”

“Wasn’t your room next to Lord Stanley?”

“It was much too disturbing, so I had it changed.”

“Then, I wonder why it’s always the one next to you that’s the target.”

“I-I wouldn’t know that even if you asked me. But, the next victim could be me, or even you. Please let me stay with you. Since, well, you have an excellent reliable servant with you.”

Edgar didn’t hide it from his face that he didn’t want a man to be following him around.

But it was sure that Ulysses had made another move. In a situation where they couldn’t escape from this estate, he might be trying to slowly put Edgar to a corner.

There still was a chance left that this fake earl could be Ulysses.

Edgar, of course, must have been thinking about that. He abruptly went up to the imposter.

“Pardon my rudeness.”

After he said that, he really did the rude thing and grabbed ahold of the man’s head in his hands. And like the man’s head was an object, Edgar turned the man’s head side-to-side and after he had confirmed something, he let go.

Now that she recalled, Teresa had said yesterday evening that right before she died, there was a man near her. That man had been wearing something like a gemstone on the back of one of his ears.

Edgar cast another glance at the fake earl who had no idea what the meaning was in what he just done.

“You don’t think that I might be the culprit?”

“Culprit? Isn’t this the work of a ghost?”

“Then why don’t you put the Bible inside your shirt and protect yourself with your own hands.”

When Edgar put his back to the man, he rushed to circle around him. He clamped his hands together and begged him.

“Please don’t abandon me, Viscount. I was just asked to come here; I never heard that this was going to happen.”

“You were asked?”

“Yes, that’s right. I was asked by the spiritualist Seraphita to play the act of marrying her daughter in order to heal Mrs. Collins’ ailing heart. Even if she was the daughter of a wealthy family, she must of never imagined that this many suitors could be gathered. Since the ghost of her daughter was only able to stay in his realm for one week, I just had to seduce her and then engage with her, so that the mother would be relieved and they would pay me my compensation.....”

Saying that much, he shut his mouth in a hurry, and looked over towards Lydia. The ghost of Teresa was only able to remain on this plain for one week. Lydia was the one who heard that, but his look said he just said the wrong thing.

Lydia looked back at him dumbfounded and pretended like she wasn’t listening.

“And so? What is the name of you who accepted this kind of job?”

“Palmer.... Uh, you see, I was in a little trouble with money. The Lady I was being under the care of went overseas, and so,”

“In order words, your occupation is an gigolo.”

“Well, I do have confidence in my looks, and I’m experienced with handling women, so it was quite an easy job,”

“To have a gigolo put up the act as an Earl is quite the way to rub up against someone’s nerves.”

Edgar seemed pretty outraged, but Lydia thought that his kind of type was perfect for the job.

Goodness, she was so disgusted that it made her relax the tension in herself. And she was relieved at hearing that the ghost would only be able to stay in her

body for one week.

But, she was worried for Teresa.

She was killed by Ulysses. Not only that, but her soul was being used by him. She was called back to the land of the living for one week, and was going through a sham of an engagement and was going to be once again sent off to the otherworld.

But, in the sense that he was deceiving her, then Lydia was guilty for the same crime.

She was wishing that the girl who was starting to fall for Edgar would be returned to the realm of the dead.

“Yes, the spiritualist. That woman is controlling a ghost and making it do such a thing!”

The gigolo Palmer yelled out the first thing that was on the top of his head.

“Oi, Viscount, we all should catch that woman and question her.”

“If it’s Seraphita, then she has disappeared.”

Oscar was standing at the salon entrance way.

“I was also looking for her because I wanted to ask her a few things, but I haven’t seen her since yesterday.”

Yesterday, which means, it could have been because Raven caused an injury to her.

“So you’re saying that she has escaped from this estate?”

“I thought no one could go across the path because of the high tide?”

“If one were to take their chances, then it wouldn’t be completely impossible to not be able to get across.”

If it were a selkie, then there would be no problem at all, thought Lydia. But, she couldn’t think up of a reason for Ermine to run from here. In the first place, if she was being controlled by the man named Ulysses, then that would mean it was his order for her disappearance.

“What about the old woman who was by the spiritualist’s side?”

“She’s gone.”

“I can understand Seraphita, but do you think that an old woman would try to cross such a dangerous path?”

Palmer tilted his head.

“She might be hiding so that no one can find her, or the both of them could have been erased just like the two gentlemen.”

As he listened to Oscar, Edgar leaned up against a display shelf. He made a painting drop with his elbow, but it was sure to be on purpose.

“Oh, excuse me.”

He said that but he didn’t bother to pick it up, which could be said to be the arrogant attitude of a noble.

He might have felt a little humiliation, but Oscar bent himself down to pick it up.

Lydia watched as Edgar peered himself over the young man from above, and then realized why he had done such a thing.

It was to check the back of Oscar’s ear.

He leaned down which made his faint blond hair fall down over his cheeks to reveal his ear. Lydia wasn’t able to see from where she was sitting, but Edgar casually moved away from Oscar and walked over towards Lydia.

“Anyways, we are in a situation where we can’t run or hide from the culprit who we don’t know is. Oscar, I honestly don’t believe anyone.”

Edgar placed his hand on Lydia’s shoulder and when got the feeling that it was a sign to be careful and on intuition realized that it was ‘him.’

Because there was the gemstone on Oscar’s ear that Teresa saw.

This young boy of a man was the one sent in by Prince? She couldn’t believe in it so easily because she had imagined him to be a more elderly man.

“I wonder if each individual just has to protect themselves.”

“Let’s do that. I’ll take Teresa under my care.”

Edgar held out his hand and helped Lydia stand up.

“That would be a little problematic.”

But, Oscar stood in their way like he was blocking them off from the exit.

“Teresa is my relative.”

Did he suspect them?

“I am her fiancé. Mrs. Collins has acknowledged us.”

“Even if you were engaged, I can’t allow you to watch over you.”

Lydia panicked. She didn't want to be left alone with one of Prince's men.

"But, I can only trust him!"

"Don't be a child now, Lydia," said Oscar with a grin.

Lydia. He knew that she wasn't Teresa.

But even Oscar himself must have realized that he was found out by Edgar. That line he just said was like he was announcing that he was Ulysses.

Edgar immediately tried to guard Lydia by standing as her shield. But Ulysses swiftly lifted his arm that held a pistol and pressed the nozzle to the back of Lydia's head.

"Now, let me have you drop your weapon."

Edgar had just put his hand inside of his coat, but for a fraction of a second, he hesitated.

"What if I said no?"

What?

Lydia couldn't believe her ears for a moment. When you have faced with a hostage, wouldn't you normally do as the person says?

"I'll kill this woman."

See-----?! I knew it would come to this.

"Why don't you go ahead. In the next second, you'll be dead as well."

What-what was that.

If he dropped his weapon, then the situation would turn to worse. Ulysses might just kill Lydia right in front of Edgar so that he would be able to inflict his pain. Was what Edgar was thinking, but Lydia couldn't spend any time to think that up.

Right behind her ear, Lydia heard the faint sound of the trigger being pulled, and she held her breath.

He was the man who killed Teresa. Killing Lydia was nothing to him. And yet, what did he mean 'to go ahead?'

Ulysses and Edgar's silent and tense stand-still continued for a while. Just when Lydia was starting to feel like it was hard to breathe, Ulysses made a smile like he was unplugging the tension from this situation.

"You are quite clever, Ted."

Ted. He purposefully called Edgar by his nickname. But Edgar looked like he terribly hated it, so Lydia thought that he must have copied the way Prince talked.

“Your target is me. Why don’t you stop trying to beat around the bush.”

“Oh, it great, how you look. The more you fight back, the more I’m excited. The final act starts from here. I’ll keep her with me so that I can have you uselessly struggle to resist.”

He pulled her arm.

This person, he’s scary. Just when she felt that, the memories of when Teresa died rose up in her mind. Lydia trembled from a terrified chill and went into a panic.

“No....., don’t touch me! You murderer!”

But she was pinned down by Ulysses and threatened with a pistol. She grew even more furious at Edgar who just stood silently watching.

If Edgar made a move, then Ulysses would shoot Lydia to constrain her. So that she wouldn’t die, he would start from her arms and legs.

But, Lydia wouldn’t have known that. You murderer, yelled Lydia once more.

“Edgar, you too! You truly don’t care what happens to me! What do you mean that he should go ahead and kill me!”

“It’s not that. Lydia, I will definitely save you so don’t do anything reckless.”



Lydia's mouth was covered, and so she wasn't able to go on and rail at Edgar, but her sense of distrust was heighten when she imagined that she was going to silently be taken away by this man?

"You shouldn't make a promise like that so easily. But, yes, if you do have a particular liking to her, then at least I'll will kill the two of you together. Why don't you try and come to save her?"

Lydia was taken out of the room like she was being dragged by the grinning Ulysses, and since she was pointed to by a pistol, she had no choice but to start walking.



Around that time, Raven, who was going off to the town alone, had finished his business and was rushing back the way to the estate.

He hurried his horse and managed to arrive at the two shores opposite of each other before the early morning low tide, but the waves which were calm at the town was just as violent as they were yesterday at only this area.

The thin path that appeared after the sea waters went down, was endlessly getting invaded by the waves and appeared and disappeared like it was battling with the heaving sea.

But since the area was still bright, it was still better than when he left during the night.

He might be easier to spot by the enemy, but he had to hurry back to Edgar's side.

The package that he was entrusted to by the messenger of the 'Scarlet Moon' was tied to his body. Raven made sure and checked that and made his horse walk on.

He headed for the house that was built all by itself on the hill that came up out at the end of the path and stepped on the path that separated the ocean waters. When he came across to the middle of the road, he saw something black floating in between the waves.

For a moment, it looked like a person's head, but he immediately could tell that it wasn't.

It was a seal. When he took a good look around him, he was surrounded by countless number of seals. No, they weren't normal seals.

Fairies?

He learned about selkie seal fairies from being told by Lydia, but when Raven felt the spirit's nerves start to stand on its end, then he was able to know that he was being targeted by something that wasn't human.

If they were sea fairies, then they wouldn't be able to reach him all the way on the shore.

He kicked with his stirrups and hurried his horse.

At that moment, all of the seal fairies dived into the sea all at once. In the next minute, a tall, humungous wave erupted from the waters and rushed over to his direction.

There was no place for him to run as he was engulfed by the waves. He was dragged down to the depths of the waters.

Even if he tried to kicked himself up, once the seals circled around him, they bit and clinged onto him to try to sink him down.

He pulled out his dagger.

When he whipped around his arm, he felt he hit something as the sea around

him turned dark red. The seals all rushed to get away from him like they were daunted for a moment.

But the red color quickly mixed and disappeared into the gray sea.

Once again, they returned their target back to him and began to swim around Raven as they tried to tighten their radius on him.

There were too many of them. He couldn't move in the water as free as he wanted.

He couldn't get another breath of air.

Just then, he thought he heard someone say stop.

This person is different, not one of them.

From behind, his arm was steadied and he was pulled up. The twisting, rough waves that had been circling him died down and disappeared, and Raven was released back up to the top of the water surface without any resistance, and as he took in deep breaths for air, he felt the hand that had saved him slowly let go, but more quickly than that, he grabbed the wrist.

".....Ermine."

"Go to the hill on that sea shore. You better get back on land before the waves get rough again," she said, in a way like she gave up trying to escape from Raven.

After the two of them sat together in a crack in the inclined slope, they were able to get away from the hard wings. If it was here, then they couldn't be seen from the house said Ermine, or the selkie that looked just like her as she sat down on the sand.

"What's different?" asked Raven as he took and threw away his coat that sagged heavy from soaking up the salt water.

Ermine looked completely exhausted and lifted her head like she didn't understand the question he was asking her and leaned her head to the side.

"You said that I was different to the selkies."

"Yes....., they are all on the edge of their nerves. Since a human whose has captured and horribly treating their kind is here."

"Ulysses."

“That’s right. But they can’t get near him, and so they attacked you thinking that you were working with him.”

“So the selkies in the sea aren’t under the control of Ulysses’ will.”

“the ones under his control are the servants in the house. They are selkies that are in human form. But some selkies in the sea are also being controlled. Ulysses is the one who is purposefully making them angry, and the selkies are making the sea storm just like he wants.”

On Ermine’s shoulder who leaned up against the rock, the knife that was jabbed in by Raven remained stuck in place.

It seemed like the blood wasn’t stopping as he could see that red was soaking over her chest. But as it slowly dripped down, it turned to a clear liquid and then into silky glass beads and dropped to the ground.

He was made to know that she wasn’t human at all. Then she wasn’t his sister. She was just an enemy.

Since the blood that was running down her body had no longer any connection to Raven.

“.....Just like you can see, I’m not the person who I was before.”

It seemed she noticed Raven looking at her wound intently.

“Miss. Carlton said that you might be a selkie.”

“Well, she is a fairy doctor.”

“Was it part of Ulysses’ plan for you to save me?”

Ermine shook her head like it was bothersome for her.

“Since I have an injury, I was told to stay low for a while. Right now, I’m not given an order other than that.But he is going to drive Lord Edgar to the edge and is probably going to keep using me from now on.”

It wasn’t like Edgar was the type to be easily swayed by his feelings. But, if it was to protect those who were dear to him, he wouldn’t think about his own safety. Ermine was his friend who he wanted to protect. Even if she betrayed him, she was still a dear friend to him so much that he felt he was responsible for not being able to stop her before what happened.

Because Ermine was that kind of person, the enemy was thinking that she would become Edgar’s weakness.

Raven felt a small bit of irritation as he walked over to Ermine's side.

"Why did you return when you should have died. Going so far as to become something not human."

"It's not like I wished for this.... No, maybe I did wish for this somewhere in my heart. If I could be forgiven, then I wished I could serve Lord Edgar once more."

"Lord Edgar has a fiancée already."

"Raven, that's not what I meant. I just want to purely serve him. That was my wish from the very beginning."

"But, you gradually wanted to have him all to yourself, and leaked our information to Prince."

Because, once Edgar became an Earl and hardened his position as an England noble, then her feelings for him would become even more unreachable. She wanted to remain at the closest distance to him by staying as his fellow comrade.

"Yes, you're right, at that time I had forgotten my feelings from when we started. It was true that there was feelings that went beyond loyalty for Lord Edgar inside me, and that part of me was taken advantage of by Prince....."

From the wound on her shoulder, blood oozed out even more. He wondered if a fairy would die if they were to lose too much blood. But can a fairy die in the first place? He wondered why she left the knife stuck in herself without pulling it out.

"Raven, you have to kill me. In the end, that's the only way there is. You must make sure and kill me so that I will never be brought back to the living world. I don't want to be used to torment Lord Edgar any further."

"But right now you are just a walking dead. Can you die any more than that?"

"As long as I'm in human form, then it seems like I can die like a human. The selkies are more close to a living creature than a fairy."

To kill her, was most likely the necessary step in order to protect Edgar, but Raven thought that would also be the most best option for Ermine.

If she says she was the same as a human, then he would be able to let her die without any pain.

He was about to reach out towards her open white neck.

“Please forgive her,” said a voice all of a sudden.

When he turned around, there was a small old woman standing there.

“Are you not her only brother? Even if she has turned into something not human, she continued to worry about you.”

“You’re a selkie as well.....?”

“Yes, my coat has been stolen and quite some time has passed since I was forced to take a human form by Ulysses. I am nearly at the point where I’ve forgotten about my selkies ways, but I am definitely a selkie.”

The old woman calmly spoke like she was talking about someone else. She had she was the slave of Ulysses, but it was apparent that she didn’t wish to serve him out of her will.

Lydia had said that selkies who had their coats stolen aren’t able to fight against the one who had it.

A slave held in captivity. Raven and Edgar was like that once before, and so he didn’t feel any malice from the old woman and continued to listen what she had to say.

“I was the one who was ordered by Ulysses to give the life of a selkie to your sister who was wandering the seas as a dead soul. She is still like an infant as a selkie. I am watching over her like a mother.”

“That’s why you say not to kill her?”

“Could you, for even just a little, think yourself as if in her position. You were the one she wanted to protect the most, more than herself and her master.”

Raven wasn’t able to understand what she had said right away.

To me, what was the most important was his master Edgar. When asked what was next, all he could say was it would be what Edgar felt important to him, something that he needed more than anything.

Since they were friends that Edgar tried to protect, Raven also poured himself in protecting everyone as well, and it was his understanding that Ermine was one of the people in that group.

He thought everyone felt the same way. They were comrades who believed in Edgar and followed and served him. There were those who were friendly and those who weren’t to Raven, but they helped and saved each other out because

they were part of the team that Edgar organized.

And yet, this old woman was saying that to Ermine, Raven was more important than their master.

“Grandmother,you don’t need to talk about that.”

“But, you are siblings.”

What are siblings? It just means that they had the same mother.

But Edgar said to him that ‘She is your sister.’ He emphasized that she was his sister.

Now that he thought about it, Raven remembered something that he was always wondering about.

How and when was it when Ermine had come in contact with Prince. If that man had figured out her weakness and controlled her to make her secretly leak the information about their whereabouts, then there should have been a chance to directly meet with Prince.

But, during the time when they were in escape, he couldn’t recall when there could have been a period of a long enough time that she could leave Edgar’s side.

When he whipped through his memory, there was one time when that was possible.

It was when Raven was captured in the enemy’s hands.

At that time, Edgar was in the middle of a fight with another organization and from his own experience, Raven knew that he had to get out with his own strength.

Edgar would naturally think that that was possible and he knew that he needed to concentrate on the large number of his comrades than just on Raven.

But, the situation turned out to be much more difficult than he anticipated. The one who came to help him at that time was Ermine.

Later on, he found out that she was acting alone, but since it turned out all right, they weren’t blamed for anything.

But, Raven thought about why Ermine had acted out of bounds without getting permission from Edgar one more time.

If they felt that Raven was having a hard time, then eventually Edgar and his men would come to his rescue. But he wondered if that would have made it in time.

But for her, it just meant that her prioritization was to rescue Raven than to follow the orders of her master.

If, in case, she had already been under the control of Prince from then....

Raven was confused more than he ever was. He tried to think about it in a logical sense, but his emotions couldn't keep up. Just that, in a vague thought, he thought that it was because she was his 'sister.'

Most likely, Edgar too, thought that that was the time which started it. That's why he said that 'she was your sister' to Raven who blamed Ermine for her betrayal.

He wanted to say that the reason she acted on her own, was because Raven wasn't just a member of their group, but because he was her brother.

Although it was connected to betrayal her friends, even if there was that danger, because she was a 'sister' she couldn't help but go.

"Raven, the selkies are starting to stir. ...Something could of happened. You need to hurry and go back to Lord Edgar's....."

He swiftly grabbed Ermine's arm who hadn't finished talking.

And after he held her down, he pulled out the knife in her shoulder in one fling. She yelled out in pain, and when she slumped down weakly, Raven slinged her on his back and turned around to face the old woman.

"How do you heal a selkie's wound?"

"It will heal when the one who stabbed with the knife pulls it out. There is nothing to worry now."

That's why she didn't pull it out herself.

"Ermine, I will have Lord Edgar judge how to treat you."

Raven took caution in trying not to be seen as he entered the house and rushed straight to where Edgar was.

It looked like the blood of Ermine on his back had stopped right after the knife was pulled out of her but she was just slumped on him right now.

It might take time until she is able to recover her strength.

He ran into the room, but there was no signs of anyone there. Just after he set down Ermine on the sofa and was about to go off to search for Edgar, the door opened.

Edgar had just returned.

“Raven, you were all right!”

Edgar saw that he came back and gave him a smile of relief.

By being by Edgar’s side, Raven was finally able to feel how it was to be treated as a human being. He didn’t think that his dangerous missions were anything compared to what this person had shouldered.

He was the only one that the brutal demon, a spirit that thirsted for blood inside Raven obeyed. His wish was Raven’s wish, so that was all he needed.

But, right now, there was just one thing that he wished for.

Raven walked over to him who had his arms open in a gesture of friendship and knelt before him.

“Lord Edgar, I would like to ask you to please forgive my sister. She may still be under the influence of Prince’s control and she may become a hindrance to you. But, I will take responsibility for that. I’ll make sure to keep an eye on her. If it turns to the worst, then I’m prepared to end her life. So please, please save her.....”

It seemed Edgar noticed Ermine who was laying on the sofa.

When he went over to her, Ermine tried to sit herself up.

She lowered her head down, and Edgar hugged her right into his arms.

“Welcome back, Ermine.”

And then, he turned around to Raven once more and did the same in embracing his shoulders.

“Welcome back.”

Raven remembered how in the past, when he returned with Ermine, sure enough, Edgar had welcomed them back just like that.

At the same time, he could sense from Edgar’s unusually hard expression that this wasn’t the time to remain overjoyed at the two of their return.

“What happened?”

“Ahhh,Lydia has been taken captive by Ulysses.”

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Chapter 6 - The Mystery of the Fortress

Oscar was Ulysses. Which means, the real Oscar Collins would naturally be dead.

Ulysses must have targeted Oscar, who came from America to visit his uncle to study and approached him. He then took away Oscar's possessions and life, and masqueraded as him and entered England.

Instead, it would mean that the one who Ulysses took the name and used the alias of was dead, but it wasn't unusual for people who die on a sea voyage that took weeks, and it wouldn't be that unheard of for someone to disappear by falling off the ship.

By doing that, Ulysses was able to easily enter the house of Mr. and Mrs. Collins who was going to meet Oscar for the first time.

And it seemed like the hint as to why Prince targeted the Collins family was hidden in the thing that the 'Scarlet Moon' messenger entrusted to Raven who brought it back.

It turned out to be a sheet of copper the size of someone's palm. The sailboat and angel motif on it was beautiful and one could see it as a pictorial, but what was important was the pattern inside the picture.

It was a pattern like a swirl of overlapping circles, but it had the look like it had a sorcery meaning behind it.

"It apparently is a charm to ward off evil."

Raven glanced over to Edgar who nodded and continued.

"This copper sheet had been recently reproduced. The year of the original is unknown, but it was apparently made by the order of the Blue Knight Earl."

The Blue Knight Earl, in other words, the other name of Earl of Ibrazel that Edgar had inherited.

Before Edgar had gained the name of earl, according to record, the last earl who appeared in England was a man from three hundred years ago, and he had a mistress who was a lady painter. From that connection, the 'Scarlet Moon'

which was an organization of decorative painting artists had been investigating about the earl family ancestors by Edgar's orders.

Edgar was having them research what the relationship between the Blue Knight Earl family that Prince was battling with and the Collins family.

"Was there a necessity to protect someone from evil forces?"

"Instead of an individual, it was something much larger... The owner of this was told from the person's ancestors that the original object was some sort of structure. The person's ancestor was involved with that structure and left the design of it on this copper sheet."

"Then the original?"

"Please take a look at this."

Raven pointed to a part of the picture. It was a crest drawn on the sail of the sailboat that was crossing the rough waters.

"Two lions....., William the Conqueror?"

William I was the Norman King that entered this land, on the shores of Hastings. He won his battle and became the King of England and became the ancestor of the royal family that continued till now.

"Which means, the original structure is in Hastings?"

"It is possible."

So, Prince's target wasn't the Collins family, but this land that the Collins family happened to build their country house on.

"However, why would the Blue Knight Earl make a charm for the land that the Conqueror came on?"

"The reason this land is important is apparently it is a vital location one would need in order to conquer England, just like how the Conqueror was able to accomplish what he did. That's why, from long ago, the 'Scarlet Moon' hypothesizes that the Blue Knight Earl had a charm to repel evil built on this land so that it would prevent the invasion from evil."

It was just recent that he was able to find out that Prince was the one who annihilated all of those who had the Blue Knight Earl's blood running in them. He thought that Prince was frightened that the earl who was close to the fairies and could freely use magical powers would arrive.

There indeed was a connection in that to make him send in one of his subordinates here.

“An invasion from evil, huh. What is that pointing to?”

Raven also tilted his head, unable to answer.

“I cannot answer that, but, only in Hastings almost lies on the straight line that connects between London and Paris. It could be thought that the charm was useful as fortress to protect England from invasions from over the sea.”

“So you mean that in order for a second conqueror to not appear, they used a charm to make the French armies retreat?”

That was hard to believe.

However, from ages ago, there had been wars that occurred between France, so there could be instances that they would rely on charms aside from actual battle fighting in order to win.

Sorcery was forbidden by the Church, but there were kings and feudal lords who secretly safeguarded and researched the art of sorcery.

He wasn't sure when it could be, but it wasn't completely impossible that the Blue Knight Earl, who had special magical powers, practiced some of his spells for the sake of the King.

“Then what does Prince want to do with the spell of the Blue Knight Earl?”

“I don't know, my lord. But the information from the ‘Scarlet Moon’ ends here.”

“.....He wants to destroy it.”

Ermine, who was lying quietly on the sofa, finally opened her mouth.

“Ulysses said it was going to be destroyed.”

“So, he's going to bring the French troops and invade this land?”

It was a silly and stupid joke.

“That may be exaggerating it a bit....” said Ermine in a whisper.

“But, Prince was successful in the underground societies in America, so there could be the possibility that he might be wishing to conquer London. Either way, if he's intending on coming to England, then he'll need to cross the Channel, and he might just be comparing the Conqueror to himself.”

Raven nodded.

“If we want to prevent Ulysses and Prince's motive, then we need to protect

the Blue Knight Earl's spells, but I wonder how on earth you would try and break such a thing?"

"Do you know where the same kind of thing as this is located?"

At Raven's question, Edgar pointed out the window. They could see a hill that curved up over the sea shore.

"There is a rock that normally can't be found on the sea shores of this area, which can be seen protruding out of the ground here and there. When Lydia had nearly dropped from that slope, I was so worried that I couldn't breathe she might hit her head on one of those rocks, and so I thought that it was a weird hill."

"So, you mean that hill itself is..."

"Rocks that were carried here by people was dug and buried there. Most likely it's that kind of thing."

When he brought up Lydia in his mind, his worry and anxiety for her was increased inside him again.

During this incident, he had put her through quite some rough ordeals.

He did think that it wasn't good to get Lydia involved in his quarrels with Prince, but on the other hand, Edgar was thinking of Lydia as a reliable military strength.

If Prince hates the power of the Blue Knight Earl, then Lydia's ability to communicate with fairies was sure to be a valuable power.

If it were comrades like Raven and Ermine who shared the same goal to fight, then danger and pain was a chance they were prepared for. Edgar made sure to pay every attention to detail he could for their lives, but he had required them to face dangers. That's why he didn't think about it every hard and had forced Lydia to bare it too.

But, she just happened to be hired by Edgar. And she happened to just saved him.

If he wished to seriously have her stay by his side even if he used the option of a foul engagement, then she was not military strength. She was a girl who Edgar needed to entirely protect.

Oh, that's right. Our 'engagement' wasn't just a contract for just have her stay

by my side.

He suddenly realized that and was even disgusted at himself.

The fiancé for Teresa wished by Mrs. Collins was someone who would think for the welfare of her daughter as much as her parent or even more than that.

What giving your daughter out for marriage meant was that their daughter, who they raised up so precious and her future was going to be entrusted out to someone. If her parent had that strong of a resolve, then the responsibility of the fiancé was heavy. To marry meant that they were in a position of taking over all of what the parent was responsible for.

Lydia and her brightness and generosity, and her soft-heartedness that would even surprise you, and her slightly roughness too, all had to be protected. He had to have distance her away from danger no matter what, but he only put her through a terrifying experience.

Even though he claimed to be her fiancé, he didn't give her what should naturally be given to her, so it was natural for Lydia not to be able to trust him, so she was sure to be deeply disappointed in him right now.

".....To allow Lydiato be taken away right in front of my eyes, I don't qualify as a man."

He wasn't going to deny that it was the obvious attitude of a man who had his fiancée taken as a hostage.

It was supposedly the best plan. But it was true that he appeared cold to Lydia's eyes, and that was because he wasn't trusted to begin with.

As he looked out the window, Edgar let out a sigh.

"Do you think that at this rate, she'll run out of patience and be disgusted with me?"

"Yes, she would."

Raven easily made his agreement, and he was honest in that opinion, and so it wasn't like he was trying to depress Edgar.

But when he was told that so easily, it was a mystery how that made him change to the feelings that he wanted to recover himself.

"I guess I should set out a plan so there's no room for escape."

"Lord Edgar, would it not be best to first think up a way to rescue Miss.

Carlton.”

“Raven, in regards to women, if you don’t think about the future with them, then you’ll come to the end of your road.”

“You seem like your usual self so I’m relieved.”

She still didn’t have the strength to sit up, but at the humored Ermine’s way of talking like she usually did, had comforted Edgar’s feelings.

“Now, as long as he isn’t killed, then it would allow us to move around more easily,”

Just then, there was a reserved knock on the door.

“Viscount.....” came a weak voice on the verge of tears.

Raven cautiously opened the door and then the fake earl Palmer came tumbling into the room.

“Perfect timing, what are your results?” asked Edgar.

“Oh, yes....., just like you said, I told that man Oscar that I’ll do anything if he would spare my life. I was told to keep on Teresa. She’s in the underground storage room. He has the key to it.”

To end up using Palmer who came begging for his own life, must mean that Ulysses was acting on his own for this mission, determined Edgar.

So it means all the ones he’s controlling are selkies. But Lydia is a fairy doctor.

The chained selkies are secretly desire Lydia’s help. If he didn’t want to have them get near her, and since there was nobody else, then he would use Palmer for the time being.

If that wasn’t the case, then someone who just came to beg for their life was a hindrance. He would have killed him and gotten it over with.

Edgar knew that Palmer might be killed and yet he used him in order to get an idea of Ulysses and Lydia’s situation, and he was aware that that part of him was what appeared too cold-hearted that Lydia couldn’t accept, but he changed his mind because he was in the middle of a battle right now.

“You did fine. Guide us there.”

“Uh, but....., are you really going protect me? Since I’ve done this kind of thing, if I’m spotted by Oscar, then I’ll be killed.”

Edgar walked over to Palmer and made a gentle smile the best as he could.

“Either way, you were next in line to be killed. Since Oscar seemed like he wanted to kill me last. Besides, there is no advantage for him to have you seriously come to his side.”

“.....I understand that. That’s why I did as you said.....”

“That’s right. In order to save yourself, you’re only left with contributing to my victory. Of course, I’ll put my efforts in making sure you come out alive and can return home.”

Palmer released the tension from his face a bit.

“Although I can’t guarantee it. Raven, let’s go.”

Palmer quickly returned to make a tragic expression, but when his shoulder was pushed, he finally started to walk.



“Suzy, it sounds very quiet.”

Mrs. Collins sat in her bed as she was looking out the window.

The sea was rough and turbulent as usual. They could hear the endless beating sound of the wind. And yet it felt so quiet.

They could have sensed the incident where everyone in the house was keeping quiet and staying low.

“Yes, you’re right, my lady.”

Suzy set down the medicine that was used to calm and rest the Mrs.’s ailing heart just a bit onto the bedside and she placed a gown onto the lady’s shoulders.

“The color of your face looks well this morning.”

“I feel so refreshed like never before.”

“It could be because the young miss’ suitor has finally been decided.”

“Yes, that must be it.”

As she made a smile, the Mrs opened the palms of her hand and looked down at the cameo brooch.

It was the brooch that should have been given to Teresa. It was a gift that was passed down from mother to her marrying daughter. On the first dinner night, Teresa was wearing it on her chest.

Suzy was suspicious and wondered if she had taken it out of her daughter’s

room.

“If that girl were to be alive..... She would have been loved by someone kind and could have been so happy,”

Suzy widened her eyes in disbelief.

“My lady, did you know all this time?”

“What?”

“Uh, that she wasn’t the young Miss Teresa,”

“She is Teresa, is she not?”

“Oh, of course....”

Even though Suzy said that, she had the feeling that her lady really did know what was going on. She was gently stroking the faint pink cameo like she was reminiscing about her daughter.

Suzy knelt down and took the lady’s hands into hers.

“I understand very well how my lady loves your daughter. No one would want to believe that they had lost the one they loved so much... But, my lady, Miss Lydia Carlton also has her family and a lover. They are people who care and love her deeply.”

“Lydia.....?”

The lady cocked her head, but Suzy didn’t let that stop her and continued.

“Miss.Carlton has done so much for the sake of my lady already. So, please set her free. Before it turns too late.”

Mrs. Collins looked down to Suzy nervously, then she gently stroked her cheek.

“Suzy, I’m sorry. It seems I’ve caused you so much worry.”

“Oh, no, my lady.”

“I know, could you get me some warm milk?”

“Yes, right away.”

Suzy was away from the room for just a short while, but when she returned with the milk, Mrs. Collins had disappeared from the room.



I’m so stupid. Lydia pounded on the door as hard as she could.

No matter how much she hit or kicked it, nothing changed.

When she realized it, the skin on her fingers were scrapped and tinged in pain.

She slumped her body down to the floor and felt like she could cry.

There was only one thin candle lit. In time, it would burn out and this underground room was sure to turn pitch black.

“Stupid, Edgar! What were you going to do if I was really shot at!”

She started to think that it was all Edgar’s fault that her hands hurt and that it was dark and frightening.

If she were to think about it with a clear mind, then the one who was at fault was Ulysses, but the Lydia right now couldn’t have possibly calmed down.

When she was thrown into this room, Ulysses told her:

[For that man, this sort of thing happens frequently.]

That would have been so for Edgar when he was hunted down by Prince and having his battles when he was living in the underground society.

[That’s why, you won’t definitely be rescued.]

He had said that he lost so many fellow comrades.

[Because if he thinks that it’s impossible, there’s always the option of giving up. Of course there would, if you didn’t live smart, no one would follow you.]

Give up? That would mean he would abandon Lydia.

No matter how much Lydia was seduced by Edgar, she wasn’t able to trust Edgar’s attitude, and only thought that he was putting his hopes on her ability as a fairy doctor.

Even if he worried about her and tried to save her, it wasn’t that he emotionally thought of her as special.

And so Lydia was overwhelmed with despair.

If Edgar were to give up on her, then Ulysses would just kill Lydia who had no value.

She heard something rustle behind her. She was in a storage room and there were so many different things piled up, so she couldn’t see what was in the back since it was so dark.

One more time, something rustled and she even heard a faint voice.

It sounded like the cry of a cat.

Could it be?

When she headed towards the source of the sound, the thing that was moving

was a tin candy box.

She opened the lid and saw there was a gray-colored ball of fur inside it.

“Nico!”

She rushed to get him out of the box.

“Lydia....? It’s too late for me.”

“What happened, Nico! Pull yourself together.”

She picked up Nico who was completely limp. She panicked and stroked his back, and he usually didn’t like to be touched or handled, but right now he was staying still.

“I’m so hungry.”



What?

“Since I was locked up, I didn’t eat anything...”

Lydia felt a bit irritated as she set Nico down on the floor. He plopped down to sit himself on the floor and picked up his tail with a rueful look and stroked it.

“Ohh, I’ve lost the shine in my tail coat.”

“You’re a fairy, so you’ll be fine even if you don’t eat for a while.”

“In order to maintain the refined silver color in my coat, I need my meals..... Oh, right, Lydia, why on earth are you here?”

"I was caught too!" she yelled as she felt ashamed and miserable, but suddenly she turned from being taken over by fear and irritation to becoming completely relaxed.

In reality, even if this empty-headed fairy cat was here, it didn't mean that Lydia was going to be saved.

"So you're locked up too.... Then, you wouldn't have food with you."

Nico showed his disappointment and slumped back down again.

"More importantly, Nico, did you find the coats of the selkies?"

"I found a suspicious room. It was made so fairies couldn't get into it. Which means it's a room that was made so that the selkies in this house couldn't enter it, right? When I was hanging around it, I was found by him, and ended up here."

"Him as in?"

"That's right, Lydia! The culprit is Lady Collins' nephew. Oscar's the one behind this! He knew right off that I was a fairy and locked me up in this tin box."

Nico puffed out his chest from pride at his discovery.

"We know that already."

"....Oh, you do."

Disappointed once more, he slumped down.

"But, there is a high chance that the selkies' coats are in that room."

As she said that, in Lydia's mind, she started to raise her awareness as a fairy doctor.

Even though she was possessed by Teresa and was dragged into this incident and happenings, Lydia remained here because she wanted to save the selkies.

This wasn't the time to be irritated at Edgar and pouting in disappointment.

"What am I doing being frightened of being abandoned. I should be the one who shouldn't give up."

Lydia stood up.

"Nico, we're getting out of here."

"How? I can't move a muscle."

That was the problem. Just when she crossed her arms and took a look around.

"Fairy doctor, are you in there?"

There was a voice that came from the other side of the door.

“...Who is it?”

“Please lean up against the wall.”

The sound of rushing water sounded like it was approaching.

In the moment she thought, what? Some kind of ferocious strength pounded against the door and ripped it open. From the wave that came pouring in through the opening, Lydia was surprised and it made her crouch down against the wall.

When it turned quiet and she lifted her head, the things that were piled up was made into a mess and crushed up against the wall behind her. The door that was destroyed was pushed up against it, but there was no sign of any water anywhere, and Lydia wasn't even wet.

“So rough,” said Nico, who poked his head out from the crack between Lydia and the wall.

I thought you couldn't move a muscle.

“Please excuse me. There wasn't any other way.”

The one who appeared was the old woman who was with Ermine.

“Are you a selkie?”

“Yes. I'm terribly sorry for not being able to do anything, while I was asking for your help.”

“That's all right, but you and everyone else had your coats all hidden and are not able to go against Ulysses, aren't you?”

“I came here while I made sure he didn't notice. I had no other choice but to transfer the soul of the dead onto you at his order. I was only able to work around his order by letting you have your freedom during the day, but that was all I could do.”

But if that was found out by Ulysses, then she might be killed to show to someone else not to go against him.

They were putting their lives at stake and trying to tie their hopes onto Lydia. She must find their coats and set them free.

“If you destroyed the door and made this much noise, then he'll know right away that a selkie did it.”

“Yes. But we needed to hurry. Either way, Ulysses plans to kill all of us off. Before that, he will try to erase you and the Blue Knight Earl. That’s why, now was the only time.”

And then, the old woman held out her hand with something in it. It was the aquamarine from her mother that she thought she lost.

“I removed it from you so that Ulysses wouldn’t take it away.”

I guess Ulysses must love gems.

When she was thinking that, the old woman said:

“Ulysses is wearing a gemstone on his ear.”

Lydia hadn’t taken a direct look, so she didn’t know what kind of gem it was, but she nodded to the sudden information that the old woman gave her.

“Please be careful. That is the heart of a selkie.”

“Eh.”

The token of trust and loyalty of the selkies.

She was just talking with Nico that if he had some way to protect himself even though he abused the selkies, then he might have a selkie’s heart.

That was the gemstone that Ulysses had on his ear.

Because he had a ‘heart,’ Ulysses was able to get close to a selkie that had its guard down and captured it. And so he collected more selkies, and stole their coats and put them in submission, but the rage of the selkies was still faced towards him who had the valuable stone.

“So? What is Ulysses going to do by not only putting you all to work but then go and kill you off?”

“Beyond that is unknown to us. Now, hurry, you have to get out of here. Before he finds you.”

As she nodded, Lydia turned to face Nico.

“Where’s the room you were talking about?”

“I said that I can’t move!”

“Just right now, you were moving just fine!”

“Let me eat something first!”

“Forget you.”

“This way, Fairy doctor.”

It seemed like the old woman was going to guide her.

Lydia left behind the useless Nico and hurried to leave the underground floor.

She could see that the selkies who were working as the servants were looking at her from the shadows with a worried look on their face.

They gave a nod of a sign to the old woman, which might have meant that Ulysses wasn't here and so it was safe. The old woman quickly rushed up the stairs.

Lydia was able to figure out immediately that the selkies that were guiding them were the ones who gathered their powers in trying to break down the door.

She had on the aquamarine from her mother, and she made sure of it by touching it with her fingers, as she became nervous if she would be able to protect the selkies.

He was the type of person who had ill intent and using the selkies' heart for his benefit. And furthermore, he probably had much more knowledge as a fairy doctor and experience than Lydia.

But she couldn't allow herself to run.

"It's here."

On the second floor, the old woman stopped in front of a normal-looking door that didn't have grandeur or importance.

Lydia gripped the doorknob that the fairies couldn't apparently touch at all.

Unexpectedly, the door wasn't locked.

She pushed it open gently to a crack, but it seemed like no one was inside.

Lydia stepped in alone.

It was a room which didn't look at all fit to hide any fur coats.

The wallpaper was a faint pink, and the curtains and table cloth were decorated with frills, and there were wooden horses and dolls perfect for hugging, and countless number of story books; however you looked at it, it was a child's room

"What's the meaning of this?"

She went and opened the closet, but it was only filled with children's dresses.

Lydia had been imagining that the selkies' coats, which should be quite a

number of fur coats-for a dozen or so, and she was going to find them piled up like a mountain, but she was confused as to where such a thing could possibly be hidden.

But if she thought about it hard, even if they were coats, they were the furs of fairies.

Since their 'hearts' were something that were as small as a gemstone, then they might be in some sort of unexpected form.

"Teresa, what is the matter?"

She was surprised at the voice and turned around. Mrs. Collins had just walked in with a vase of live flowers in her hands.

"Mrs.....I mean,Mother."

She didn't pay any heed to Lydia who quickly corrected herself and she walked over to open the window.

"Isn't this room nostalgic? It was the room that you used when you were a child. When it was summer every year, we came here to spend the season. Do you remember?"

She spoke like she was talking to herself, and the Mrs picked up a doll of Teresa's.

"All this time, I was afraid to come into this room. If I were to see an empty room, then I felt like would be accepting the fact that you died."

Teresa, who was swallowed up by the waves and taken away. This room must have been sealed away from that day.

The key must have been unlocked because the Mrs had opened it up and then went to go fetch some flowers to decorate the room with. And it looked like she hadn't opened it for ten-some years.

There was a large possibility that Ulysses had hidden the furs in this unopened room anticipating that even the Mrs wouldn't come into it.

But, she wondered where they could be.

"Oh, it's full of dust. But, that can't be helped, since twelve years have passed now."

Dust? Lydia turned her eyes to look at the small box that was placed on top of the shelf. Because that was the only thing that wasn't covered in dust and it

easily caught one's eye with its sparkling, patented-leather enamel design. It looked like it was a make-up kit. When she opened the lid, there were a number of small walnut-sized glass balls in it.

When she picked one up, it felt damp and had elasticity to it. The ball had the faint color of the blue sea and it had the warm like some kind of living creature. Oh, could this perhaps, be the fur coat of the selkies?

"Oh, that cosmetic case."

Lydia's heart jumped and she kept the box in her hands as she turned around to face the lady.

She wanted to take it out with her some way, but she wondered if the lady would dislike that.

"Uh, this really is a beautiful vanity case."

"Isn't it? You were so small, yet you wanted this more than toys... You carried it with you wherever you went. That's why you brought it to this estate as well..."

She made a smile as she let her eyes fall to the floor.

"If you wouldn't mind, I would like for you to have it."

"What...."

"If it was at your age, then I think it'll be just perfect."

With her plump hand, she stroked the coral decoration.

"It's amazing. I thought I would definitely want to die if I were to ever see this room, but I feel so refreshed. Ever since that girl left me, I felt like I was wandering in darkness for such a long time, but now I can feel a faint light."

Mrs. Collins who said that appeared like she knew what happened with everything.

She even looked like she knew that the ghost of Teresa wasn't really her Teresa.

"Um...."

"I had ordered a much more wonderful vanity box to prepare for your marriage, but you just really prefer that one, don't you."

But she slipped back into her dream once more.

The vanity box that held the selkies' coats. The memento of the lady of her precious daughter. Lydia cradled that into her arms strongly.

"My lady, oh, here you were."

It was Suzy. She must have been worried because she didn't know where the lady of the house went and looked over to them in relief.

"Oh, thank goodness, the misses was here with you."

Lydia and Suzy looked into each other's eyes and exchanged smiles.

"Mother, this room is so dusty. Let's go to the garden."

Just when she called to the Mrs so that she could take her out of the room.

"Fairy doctor, Ulysses has-!"

She heard the pressured voice of the selkie.

At the same time, the door was slammed shut and she could tell that the door was locked from outside.

"Hey, open this door!"

Lydia pounded the door, but there was no reply. She could sense the selkie was gone as well.

"Miss, what on earth...."

Suzy stepped over towards Lydia. Mrs. Collins tilted her head in confusion but it didn't seem like there was any danger yet. However, if something were to happen while they were locked up, then it wouldn't be any good to her mental state.

"Yes, Suzy, this is the work of the culprit. That man is planning on killing off everyone here."

"Did you find out who the culprit is?"

"It's Oscar, but I'm sure he isn't the real nephew of Mrs. Collins."

Suzy gulped down her air in surprise.

"No-now that I think about it, the young Lord Oscar had just returned from America last month, and it was the first time for anyone to meet him in this family...."

Suddenly, they could smell something burning.

From the crack of the door, smoke came seeping in. when she pressed her ear against the wooden door, she heard the sound of wood burning as well as felt an immense heat.

"It's a fire!"

Lydia rushed to go over towards the window.

But from the window, something was thrown in.

It was a bin that shattered the window glass and from it spilled some kind of liquid, which instantly caught on fire and spread throughout the room.

When Lydia crouched down in reflex, her eyes saw the sight of the curtain which was engulfed in flames came slowly spreading out down over her.

She tried to escape from under it.

But her foot caught onto something. A bird cage came falling down onto her.

She hit her head and she became dizzy.

“Suzy!”

She could hear the scream of Mrs. Collins. Lydia tried to keep her consciousness awake. She opened her eyes.

The Mrs had rushed over to Suzy who was on her side and after she put out the fire on her skirt, she hugged the girl in her arms and dragged her towards the wall where the fire hadn’t reached to yet.

“Suzy, you mustn’t die, I’ll save you!”

She dumped the water from the vase on her gown. She then placed it on top of Suzy’s head and desperately tried to stand her up.

It was the look of a good mother who was trying to protect her daughter.

Mrs. Collins seemed to have completely forgotten about Lydia and about Teresa.

To her, Teresa was a daughter who died. But Suzy, she was someone who stayed by her side, someone precious than her daughter who was already dead.

This is what’s best, thought Lydia. Mrs. Collins was surely going to stop obsessing over Teresa. Because she has realized that she had a ‘daughter’ who cared so much for her, even if they weren’t related by blood.

But still, I do feel a little lonely.

Oh, that’s right, I need to do something about myself.

No one is going to save me.

When she realized it, she was holding onto the aquamarine pendant.

Mother, yes, I know. I’m a fairy doctor, so it’s my job to be help to someone.

Even if I’m alone, I just need to believe in myself.

Lydia finally lifted up herself.

She was able to avoid the curtain and its fire, but the window was covered with flames and it was impossible to get near.

And, to put it off, when she fell down, the vanity box flew out of her hands.

The lid of it was open and its containment was spilled out on the floor. Lydiar ushered to pick up the box and scraped up the half-clear balls together.

“It’s not enough....”

She looked around her. Beyond the flames, there was one and another that was on the floor.

Oh, no. If the coats were burned up, then the selkie would die.

Ulysses had said that he would have the selkies die off and so he must be planning on burning down the house along with the people and furs in it.

She tested if she could jump through the flames. But the wind that blew in from the window made the flames suddenly rise up.

Lydia could only close her eyes and then she felt herself be embraced in someone’s as if to protect her from the hot wind.

In that position, she was dragged along.

She heard the loud sound of something crumbling down and then Lydia fell down to the floor in somewhere dark.

“Lydia, thank goodness I made it in time.”

She couldn’t see because it was so dark.

“.....Edgar.....?”

“Can you stand? The fire will reach here soon. We need to hurry and get outside.”

He pulled her arm and started to walk. When her eyes came to adjust to the light, it was somewhat dark, but she found out that she was in the passage way that was used only by the servants.

She wasn’t able to get near the window or door in Teresa’s room, but there was another exit.

“Suzy and Mrs. Collins are...”

“Raven should have gotten them out.”

“And, the coats of the selkies,”

She had the vanity box clutched in her arms. She had one of them gripped in

her hand. But there still was a number of coats that were still in left laying in that room.

Lydia stood still and was able to turn back the way she came, but Edgar stopped her.

“It’s useless now.”

“No, I don’t want to give up!”

“Don’t say something so senseless.”

“But, ... I know, Ermine’s selkie coat might be in one of them. This coat, if this coat gets burned, the selkies will die!”

“.....There’s nothing we can do,” he said sharply after was a short moment like he was undecided.

She remembered how Ulysses said that Edgar was able to make the decision of giving up.

“What do you mean there’s nothing we can do? Is it because it happens so often? Just like that, you give up on any other one’s life.”

Even if she talked about ideals and dreams, he knew from experience that there were situations where there was nothing one could do. Lydia understood that he was pressured to make an agonizing decision in the past, and then lost his comrades because of it, and just how much he suffered because of that.

And yet she was saying such a horrible accusation. But she couldn’t stop.

How she felt like she was abandoned by Edgar and the loneliness that she felt as she was about to be engulfed in the fire made her closed-minded.

“Why don’t you just hurry up and give up on me. You don’t have to save me. I’m not yours to claim. I’m just going to act so that I will be satisfied!”

He pulled her shoulder. She knew she had said too much. But he just spoke in a calm manner.

“Then I’ll go.”

“What?”

Edgar turned back the way they came. He only said to Lydia to keep on going to get outside, and ran down the thin corridor.

You’re kidding....

Lydia wasn’t grasping the flow of events and just stood there in a daze.

Then she went in a hurry to go after Edgar.

But when she just took a few steps, she felt the smoke come pouring in her direction and started to cough.

The fire had started to reach the corridor. She could see the flickering light of the flames in the beyond. Just when she thought that, the speed of the fire suddenly increased and it lit up everything around her.

“Edgar...., oh, no, what should I,”

Just when she was about to slump to the floor, her arm was grabbed.

“I said to go outside.”

He said to her in a somewhat angered tone and urged her on, to which Lydia honestly followed.

The place where the two of them came out to was the garden behind the house and they could see that there was fire coming out of the large house here and there.

It seemed like Ulysses had lit fires all over the house.

They got away from the smoke and went towards the upwind as they got away from the house that had small sparks of fire dancing about. When they reached the stone stairway that lead down to the beach, they were finally relieved from the smell of smoke and Lydia’s strength left her and she sat down.

Edgar had stopped and was standing as he looked down to her.

“I was also able to find one.”

On the palm of his hand that he opened, there was one selkie coat.

Lydia accepted it and as she checked inside the box, she slumped her head.

“How many are you missing.”



“About half.....”

“You were able to save half of them. But you may think I should say that so lightly.”

It was easy if it was just talk. That’s why it would be easy to blame him. But Edgar had really come back from the flames.

The one who was only talk was Lydia.

“Why did you come to rescue”

“I said I would definitely save you.”

“I wasn’t counting on that. I don’t believe one word of what you say. ...But, then why, why would you go into such a dangerous fire...”

“Even if you don’t believe me, I’ll go anywhere for you.”

“You say that so easily.”

It wasn’t like he did the impossible for Lydia’s sake. He guessed that there still have enough time and that was why he was able to return.

Even if it was impossible for Lydia to return, he just decided that he would be able to do something.

“What you did must have been easy for you. Otherwise, you would have given up.”

But she wondered how much courage and nerve one needed in order to calmly determine and act like that.

He said it so easily that it was for Lydia, but it couldn't have possibly been that easy.

She was so surprised and her heart was moved, but she didn't like herself for not being able to honestly say thank you.

"It's all right for you to be angry."

"Why do you think I would be angry?"

"I'm saying such unreasonable, horrible things."

She felt the sigh that he let out was a particularly long one.

"When I think I got a step closer to you, you always take a step back," he said and made a sad smile.

"You sometimes seriously worry about me, and you nearly open your heart out to me, but it's my fault for making to step away again. I would do things that are insensitive or make you go through horrible things.... I know that no matter what I say, it's my fault for not being able to have you trust me."

He was talking in an unusually serious tone.

"I'm frequently told by women I come to get close with. Just like Teresa said yesterday, even if I'm not serious, they just want to feel like we are lovers when we are together. They must feel that I am wishing for a light relationship. My half-hearted attitude must be what makes them say that, but so far I've thought that if we were both enjoying ourselves then that would be best. That's why, to tell you the truth, you were the first one to say to me that if I'm not serious, then to don't get near you. And so I'm thinking that if someone like you who would say that would come to feel for me, then I might be able to change."

She felt him move to sit down next to her, but Lydia still remained with her head down.

"Your seriousness and my seriousness may be different. But if you desire me to be serious, then I think I would be able to get near that."

"That's impossible. We are too different."

"I know. But I won't give up."

Why do you, why are you like that.

“I said it’s impossible. Because, I’m useless.”

He leaned his head to the side, like he didn’t understand.

“I wasn’t even able to be Teresa. Mrs. Collins knew that I and the ghost girl wasn’t her. She knows that her dead daughter won’t come back. ...I too, came to understand that my mother is no where here. I haven’t been taught anything from my mother, and just went ahead and called myself a fairy doctor. Even if I try my hardest, I’m useless.”

If Edgar didn’t come and save her, then there was nothing Lydia could have done in the fire.

She was sure to not have been able to rescue even one of the selkies.

In that moment, as Lydia was trying to rouse herself into action, she was practically in complete despair.

The one that Mrs. Collins had tried to rescue was Suzy and Lydia was left all to herself.

She only had the pride of a fairy doctor, and didn’t have enough knowledge and experience and there was no one to support her like her mother had.

She was so useless and so ashamed. Because of that, she thought that she was even Edgar had ran out on her.

And yet he came.

She was happy, but now, she was feeling that she didn’t have the strength to be able to live up to his expectations.

“That’s why it’s impossible for me. I’m a coward, and there so much that I can’t do on my own. I’m just bluffing, but really I’m frightened out of my mind. Even if I think that I need to help the selkies, it’s impossible for me to face Ulysses. I just want to hurry and run out of here!”

After she said it, she realized it. She was brought to this strange and unfamiliar place by someone she didn’t know who, and was possessed by the ghost of a daughter who died, and even more, she made the decision that she was going to stay here so that she could help the selkies, but that was only thanks to Edgar being here.

If she was going to face the enemy with him by her side, then she felt like something could be possible.

Because she wasn't alone, she was able to keep her courage.

She wasn't aware that she was counting on Edgar, so when she felt that he had given up on her, she suddenly became so terrified and fell into despair.

"I'm sorry."

".....Why are you apologizing?"

"I won't let you feel that way. I'll stay by your side."

"I-I didn't mean that I wanted that."

It was that kind of meaning, but she suddenly became embarrassed.

"Ever since I met you, a path of freedom has opened up for me. I would be happy if you would continue to stay with me, and in that case, I want you to count on me. I may not know about fairies, but I think I could support you.I feel that I want you to lean on me."

He looked out towards the sea and said it in a way like he was tightening his resolve.

She stole a glance at him.

His silky and bright golden hair hanged down over his eyes. She looked at the handsome side of his face and noticed that the end of his hairs was burnt.

Without thinking about what she was doing, Lydia reached out her arm. She brushed his burnt hairs to the side with her fingers, but then he looked at her.

His ash mauve eyes were a vague color, which didn't tell if he was a good or bad man, or if he was cold or warm, or a lie or the truth; they were the impression in themselves that she had of him.

When she realized what was going on, Lydia's hand was gripped by Edgar's tightly.

His beauty that melted people's hearts was right in front of her. And yet he leaned her closer.

"Wa-wait just a....."

She didn't stop but stick one of her arms out straight to push his face away.

"....Hmmm, the mood just now was an okay one no matter how you think about it."

He said it in a way like he was completely dissatisfied.

He really was unbelievable. We were in the middle of having a serious

discussion just now.

“Is that the only thing you’re thinking about?”

“Well, roughly.”

And this obviously wasn’t the time for such a thing.

The country house that stood beyond the trees was swallowed up by even more flames.

But he swiftly changed Lydia’s mood from a depressed one. He wasn’t a completely frivolous man, and this light character must be Edgar’s weapon.

People were saved by it and she wasn’t scared anymore.

“Even if it was someone useless like me....”

Would you want to marry me?

Ohh, but she didn’t the courage to be able to say something like that.

“What?”

“.....Nothing.”

Maybe because she was tired, her consciousness was started to drift away even though it wasn’t evening yet.

“I feel so sleepy.Teresa is about to wake up.”

She just had the feeling, so she leaned up against Edgar’s shoulder.

Because Teresa would go and get close to him so innocently, she must have felt like she was allowed to do the same.

It could have not been Lydia, but Teresa’s influence that was taking over. And as she was shifting the blame, no matter how much she cuddled up against Edgar, she realized that she felt displeased about it.

As her heart beated rapidly, Lydia learned how he treated other women and that he acted in such a loving way towards them.

When she imagined that it was a hug towards Teresa, she was a little irritated, but if it wasn’t like that, Lydia would be running off in a dash, but in turn, when she thought that she was the one that was reflecting in his eyes, then she thought highly of herself and thought that she was the one receiving all of this in this embrace.

Edgar’s back is a little wider than father’s. He’s slender but he had more height than father.

“Teresa?” asked Edgar when he noticed that she made a little fidget.

“.....The sound of waves....., am I outside?” murmured Teresa in a dazed tone, as she just woke up. Since Lydia let go of the little amount of restraint she had, and she even did the act of leaning up against him, so she thought he might have figured out that it was Lydia until just now who was doing the moving.

She was flurried at Teresa and how she placed her hand so casually and easily on his lap, and so Lydia used her influence and made her left hand life up from him.

He made a little snicker like he was amused, and Edgar placed his hand over hers in order to stop her from going.

His hand was much more delicate than father's.

“Oh, why are we in a place like this? And my dress has gotten so dirty.”

“The house is on fire.”

“What, oh, no, how horrible!”

Teresa turned around to look and became even more surprised when she saw the fire that engulfed the house.

In a flash, Edgar made a difficult face and looked up to the sky.

“The wind has changed direction. Let's move upwind.”

Chapter 7 - The Dream of the Aquamarine

Completely covered in thick flames, the house was burning down. They darted to avoid the sparks of fire and after they moved across the small protruding island, Lydia and Edgar naturally headed towards the hill.

Or to be correct, Teresa and Edgar was.

The vanity box was being carried by Edgar.

Lydia's consciousness was floating around in herself as she still felt tired, but had managed to stay awake.

The sea looked to be even more turbulent, and to Lydia's eyes, it appeared like the number of selkies has increased.

She could feel how angered the selkies have become. But Ulysses had possession of a 'heart' so he was able to remain unharmed.

Ulysses' plan wasn't to burn down the house. When she imagined that he was still going to lay something a snare out for them, her nerves continued to be in tension.

With her left hand that remained under her control, Lydia searched for the aquamarine pendant.

She was scared beyond her imagination. If Ulysses was someone who used his fairy doctor knowledge for bad purposes, then the one who probably had to face him, was not Edgar, but Lydia.

But, she wasn't alone. It was all right for her to believe that, right?

"Uh, Lord Viscount, why has things turned out this way?"

Teresa was walking as she was clinging onto Edgar's arm.

"It's all right. I'm with you."

"Why do I have periods in my memory when I don't remember anything?"

She appeared to be unnerved, and not only frightened by the fire, but must have started to notice the unnatural condition she was in.

"I really did come by alive, didn't I? I won't be sent back to the land of the dead, right?"

That was what Lydia was worried about.

To begin with, Lydia was told that the girl's soul would only be able to remain inside Lydia for one week. It was news that she wouldn't want to believe. Even if she wasn't the real Teresa, she had come to accept the life of Teresa and came to fall for Edgar, but she wondered how the girl would feel if she learned that she was going to lose everything once again.

".....And, who is Lydia?"

Only with her left hand, Lydia froze. Why did she know about her.

"What do you mean?"

Edgar's act of being ignorant was so natural, that he seemed used to being questioned about another woman's presence.

This is why I can't trust this animal's flirting lines....

"Yesterday, that's what you called me when I was asleep."

What?

"You must have been dreaming."

"A dream...., I wonder if you're right. You seemed to be suffering from something, and said something like please forgive me, and had been holding my left hand for quite some time. For some reason, it felt like I shouldn't interrupt you."

Really? Then that means, Lydia, who didn't know anything about this, must have been asleep.

Teresa stopped, and she looked down at her body.

"Sometimes, there's a moment when I feel an awkwardness. I ask myself if this is really me. Like the distance to my tiptoes or was if my hand and nails were ever this clean and smooth."

She took a strand of her dull rust-colored hair that was blown up by a gust of wind swirled up around them and tilted her head.

"The color of my hair, and when I looked in the mirror, everything just doesn't seem exactly right. I was trying not to think about it that much, but when I heard the name Lydia, my doubt just got bigger and bigger...."

Edgar looked at Teresa with an undecided look, but didn't say anything.

"This girl isn't me. I died once and lost my body...., isn't that right? You were so

nice to me because this girl is special to you?”

What are you going to do, Edgar.

Lydia listened as she was on the edge of her seat.

“If you would stay by my side, then I thought that I didn’t mind if you acted like my lover. But, even when you’re with me, your words and embrace doesn’t belong to me.”

“Teresa.”

“Tell me the truth.”

Edgar lowered his eyes like he surrendered.

“.....Lydia is my fiancée. She was kidnapped and disappeared from London. When I came here to take her back home, you were inside her.”

Teresa was shocked and made a painful sigh.

“Why, why didn’t you tell me at the start? I would have wanted you to tell me before I grew feelings for you....!”

“Teresa, that scoundrel had deceived you and was trying to do what he wanted. So that you wouldn’t try to escape or give into despair and injure that body.”

At the voice that interrupted them, Teresa turned around.

From beyond the trees that grew scattered all around, a young man appeared. He ,with his faint blond hair, had on a smile that was so inhuman and cruel that it didn’t go along with his slender image of a man who still had a boyish look to himself.

“Ulysses...”

“He honestly wishes for you to hurry up and die and go back up in the sky.”

Like she was shaken, she slowly backed away from Edgar.

“He’s right, viscount, I’m just a dangerous ghost that is a hindrance to you.”

“Come with me, Teresa. If it was me, I’ll let you become human. I can make that body become yours permanently.”

“You could never do such a thing. If you could, you would have done it from the start. Ulysses, you deceived Mrs. Collins just for the purpose of being able to take control over this house, and so you killed her and played her up to be Teresa’s ghost.”

“I wonder if that kind of thing has any relation to her now. Oh, Teresa, don’t

you want to be alive once more? You're still so young and there was sure to be so much wonderful things to enjoy waiting to happen for you. If you do as I say, then I'll let you stay in this realm. Or, do you want to remain unnoticed by anyone and disappear without anybody remembering you?"

"Don't go, you'll just be tricked."

Even if Edgar said that, Teresa started to walk over in a wobble to Ulysses' direction.

"Can you really have me not die?"

"He was the man who killed you!"

"Lord, even you wished for her death. Aren't you the same as me?"

No, you can't, Teresa. Ulysses won't hold his promise. Once he meets his goal, he's sure to not leave anyone alive.

Lydia was desperately trying to yell out from insider herself, but it didn't reach her.

"Pick this up."

Ulysses threw a knife over onto the ground near Teresa's feet.

"Let's have you take that vanity box from that man and bring it over to me."

Teresa did pick up the knife but she still looked confused. She must be wondering why on earth an old vanity box like that.

But they couldn't allow Ulysses to steal it away. It was the selkies that they had tried so hard to rescue.

For the sake of the selkies who believed in their fairy doctor and put their lives in Lydia's hands, she needed to protect it at all costs.

However, Lydia was only able to move her left hand and nothing else.

Edgar, please. Don't give it to him.

"I can't give you this."

"Well, then, Teresa, let's have you use that knife and take a little poke at your arm."

Whaaat?

"You yourself won't feel any pain. Even if that body gets ruined, I'll prepare another body for you."

You've got to be kidding!

Teresa still couldn't decide, but she pressed the knife against her arm most likely from curiosity to see if it really didn't hurt.

"Stop it!" yelled Edgar, and Teresa stopped her hand.

Ulysses laughed like he was enjoying himself.

"Weeell now, so you're surrendering already?"

And then he spoke to Teresa.

"Slowly, walk over to him. Oh, but you can't get too close. Make sure to have the knife against your knife. It's all right, even if your hand slipped, you won't die. Since you died once already."

Teresa still looked hesitated, but did as she was said like a puppet on strings.

She didn't know what she really should do.

Even if she liked Edgar, she still had feelings of like she was betrayed. She had jealousy towards Lydia. At the same time she wanted to live, she was also lost if she should trust the man who killed her to begin with.

Even Edgar who was silently watching Teresa's behavior without moving, must have felt the unsteadiness of her heart. He must be trying to think of a way to somehow repel Ulysses' temptation from her.

But, even if he said something that sounded like he cared for her, it was only just a lie.

"Lord, let's have you set down the box and step away from it. Or, would you like to see some more blood?"

No one wants to see that. She thought that on one hand, but on the other, Lydia echoed to herself that she wouldn't mind bearing with a little bit of pain.

Hey, Edgar, you forced me to bear before even if I was in pain, so don't go changing your mind and give the box over to him so easily.

But Edgar looked like he earnestly didn't want to give Lydia any pain as he set down the box by his feet.

If he called out to the sleeping Lydia and it was his true feelings that made him ask her to forgive him, then.....

I'm surprisingly thought of by someone....?

But, wait, now wasn't the time for this.

"Maggie," said Edgar abruptly, as he remained in his place not moving away

from the box.

She looked back at him with a curious look.

“You are not Teresa. You’re Maggie. Do you want to remain not remembering about yourself and can’t see the truth?”

“.....Maggie.....”

“That’s right. Maggie, the seamstress.”

From his chest pocket, Edgar took out a handkerchief and unfolded it open to show it to her.

“Your needlework, you’re very used to it. The initial M and the design of the four-leaf clover and the ladybug is the symbol of good luck and happiness. You must have wanted to embroider this into your belongings or you didn’t feel at ease. I think you must have been a very good seamstress.”

Oh, that was it, she was that girl, though Lydia as she remembered. The girl who said she was going off to meet a man who said he was Earl Ashenbert and her body was found the next day in the Thames River. The police detective said she was a seamstress and her name was Maggie Morris.

The poor young girl.

“Maggie, even you had someone who you held dear to you. You can remember, right? Who was it that taught you how to sew?”

As she stood dazed from listening to Edgar’s words, there was a tear, that she herself didn’t realize, which came pouring out.

“.....That, Momma said it was a good luck....charm....which Momma taught me....”

“You’re real family and friends would be wishing for the peace and happiness of your soul. Do you want to forget about them and cut off your ties and bonds from them? Do you really hope to switch over to a completely different person’s life?”

Edgar took a step out towards her.

“The people who cared for you are sure to not be able to forget about you even now. Their sorrow won’t be healed, but if you don’t forget about them, then they could think of that as their support and keep on living their lives.”

“Teresa, don’t listen to what that man says, if you stay as Teresa, you’re wishes

will be granted! You won't have to work for money anymore. You can even marry a noble!"

Ulysses raised his voice. But now, the name of Teresa didn't reach her ears.

"Please, I ask of you, Maggie, I feel sorry for having to hurt you. But I have someone I hold very dear to my heart. I want to protect her body and heart.Please give me back Lydia."

Maggie was crying, and Lydia felt confused as she felt like she was crying. You sound like you really mean it, Edgar....

"....I remember now. I...."

From Maggie's hand that lost its strength, the knife fell out.

"I was always looking up to the rich and wealthy. If I was able to marry a rich man, I thought that I would be able to be happy, and so I was always making up the lie that I was the daughter of a prestigious family."

She looked up to Edgar and she smiled as tears were coming down her face.

"When I became Teresa, I was pampered and looked up to by everyone, it seemed like a dream and I was so happy. Even if I felt something was wrong, I wanted to continue like I didn't notice it. But, I'm glad to find out that this body isn't mine and that Viscount, you don't really love me. Because, even if I was a normal seamstress girl, I was able to remember that I had my own precious things I held dear to myself."

"Don't be stupid, you hated your birth and your family. That's why when I said I was an earl, you were mad with joy!" yelled Ulysses stubbornly. But, Lydia thought different.

Even if they were bickering and fighting with each other, there isn't anyone who doesn't care for their family.

"I want to go home. To my Momma who was so pestering and my Papa who was so lazy and my bratty little brothers, they are my only family.Do you think I'll be able to fly there."

"Yes, definitely," answered Edgar, to who she hugged tightly.

Huh, what? Why?

"So she (Lydia) won't fall."

"Yes, I'll be sure to hold her."

"You better hold her more tightly. When we separate, she's sure to shove you away."

Oh, my goodness, she's figuring things out.

Was it because I was always putting out my left hand so that our bodies won't be pressed together?

But right now, since Maggie was holding onto Edgar with both arms, Lydia couldn't breathe and her heart was beating rapidly and she thought she was going to fall over.

"Thank you for finding the real me."

Inside her body, Lydia felt the sensation of a light breeze blow through her. At that same time, her body lost its strength to stand.

He was holding onto her tightly so she didn't fall over, but even when she returned to herself, she didn't have the strength to push Edgar away.

"Lydia, you've come back. I won't let you go anymore."

.....What are you saying.

She had thought that he was so handsome when he had convinced Maggie, but he was so quick to joke around.

"Edgar, now's not the time for..."

Lydia carefully looked over towards Ulysses. He tsked with his tongue and tried to take out a pistol.

"All these good-for-nothings aren't any use at all."

And yet, Edgar whispered to Lydia that it was all right and held onto to her. The bushes rustled.

Raven attacked Ulysses, who tried to turn aside to dodge as fast as he could.

In one kick of his leg, he sent the pistol flying out of his hand and with his emotionless face, he whipped the knife in the air.

She thought he was going to cut his throat in one wave of his arm. However in one second earlier, Ulysses backed around a tree.

The knife dug into the trunk of the tree, and Lydia watched in horror at how if that was someone's neck then they wouldn't last a second.

Even Ulysses must have known that he wasn't any match to try to fight him one-on-one.

During the short while that Raven re-gripped his knife, he made the distance between them even further.

“A weapon that walks, huh. I didn’t want to come across with you and so I was trying to avoid you.”

He put up his hand like a signal, and then two men came walking out from the depths of the trees.

“Do it,” ordered Prince and took out a water-colored ball from his pocket so that they could see it and played around with it in his hand.

It’s a selkie coat. He still had one which mean the ones in the box wasn’t all of them.

Which means, those two are,

“Raven, they’re selkies!”

At the same time Lydia yelled out to him, a twisting wall of water came splashing up to them.

From fear of being caught and pulled under the waters, she closed her eyes tightly and as she heard the thundering sound of the waters, she felt herself be lifted off her feet.

She was going to be separated from Edgar. She couldn’t breathe because of the water coming up around her.

Just when her consciousness was about to fade away, the pressure of the water suddenly washed away. At that same time, Lydia was thrown down to some hard surfaced area.



“Ow.....”

She opened her eyes, but it was pitch black. She was washed by the sweep of the water for just a short while, but she had no idea where it had taken her.

The ground below her feet felt like a cold, stone floor and there was some sort of vertical pillar.

Which means she must be in a building some place.

“Lydia, are you there?”

She heard Edgar’s voice coming from the distance. She searched the area around her with her hands trying to touch anything around her. But, in the direction she thought the voice came from, a wall was blocking her path.

“Edgar, where are you?”

“I can’t see well. Are you hurt anywhere?”

Since his voice bounced around and echoed around her, she wasn’t able to grasp the right direction.

“No, I’m fine. But, I can’t figure out why we are in a place like this....”

“Wouldn’t this be the work of the selkies from just earlier?”

“Then, that would mean we’re held captive by Ulysses?”

“I think this is different than that. I’m guessing that although they were forced under his submission, they secretly brought you here. The rough water current had washed away the trees from the area around us, but we were protected by

the water, so we didn't get any injuries."

Perhaps this could have been a secret rebel of the selkies who had their coats in Ulysses' grasp.

The old woman selkie had even made an alteration on her own on Lydia's condition of being possessed by the ghost of Maggie so that she would be able to move around freely at least during the day.

"Despite that, it's so strange that my clothes aren't wet at all when we were washed by the current."

"It wasn't real water, but more like the magic that was created by the selkies."

The captive selkies wished to be released from Ulysses and were still laying their hope on Lydia.

"Lydia, if we both move around, then I think we won't be able to reach each other. Could you stay put for just a bit."

"All right...., but,"

"It'll be fine, I will definitely find you. Let's continue talking. Your voice will lead the way."

She replied all right, and tried to squint her eyes to see around her, but even it was her eyes that had adjusted to the darkness, she couldn't see anything.

"Uh, Edgar, why do you think that the selkies had carried us to a place like this? I wonder where we are."

"Maybe we're underground of the hill. I think that this is the repelling charm that the Blue Knight Earl from the past had made built."

"Repelling charm?"

"I heard that it was some sort magical-built fortress to protect London from an invasion from foreign enemies. Ulysses was ordered by Prince and came here to destroy that."

"Destroy? This? How?"

She couldn't see it, but from how their voices echoed so far, she felt it was quite an immensely large open space. Even when she moved her body just a bit, her hands touched a stone wall or pillar and so she was able to image that it was made in a maze-like design, but then it was all the more impossible to be able to be destroyed by just one person.

“That’s the part that I can’t figure out as well.”

In the next second, Lydia came to realize something.

Just earlier, when she was walking the ocean beach as her body was under Maggie’s control, she saw how the sea had become even more rough and stormy. In that same moment, she also watched how there was an endless number of selkies that bobbed and swam in the ocean currents.

In the house fire, the coats of the selkies that they weren’t able to rescue should have been burned. Since selkies had a strong bond within their kind, more members of their kind were gathered because of their sorrow and fury.

However, the one who set the fire so that he could massacre all the selkies he had was Ulysses. Which means he purposefully did that in order to gather that many selkies filled with rage.

“Oh, no! Ulysses plans to use all those selkies!”

“What do you mean?”

“When one of their kind is treated horribly, they have the trait of gathering into a group and exacting their revenge. Because of what Ulysses had done, there is an unbelievably large number of selkies that was gathered around the island for revenge. If all of them were to make an attack at once, a small island like this would be easily crumbled and washed away.....”

Edgar must have accepted the serious situation, as he remained quiet for a short while.

“But, why are they now attacking now?”

“Most likely, Ulysses is holding them back. He has the heart of a selkie with him. It’s the gemstone that he wears on his ear. Normally, selkies give it to a human as proof of their trust and as a symbol of their friendship, but Ulysses got his hands on one and is misusing it.”

“So if a human has that, then it means the selkies couldn’t attack him and they would have to listen to what he says, huh.”

“Unlike when he has a coat, it can’t make them do as he says, but I think that to a person who has a ‘heart,’ the selkies must hold him in high regards.”

Even if he was hated by the selkies, Ulysses showed that he had one in his possession and was able to safely fence off with them. He had the ability that

abled him to do that.

Against a man like that, Lydia wondered what there was she could do.

She was ashamed herself. Even if she considered herself a fairy doctor, in the most important moment, her inexperience was completely highlighted and stood out.

But, if Ulysses was seriously intending to use the selkies, then that would mean that Lydia had to be the one to do something in order for them to survive this.

Edgar wasn't able to stop the selkies himself.

And if she wasn't able to come up with anything, everyone here won't be able to survive. Edgar and Raven, and Mrs. Collins and Suzy, all would be washed away along with the island.

At such an immensely heavy pressure, Lydia was starting to feel sick.

When she nearly wobbled over, the tip of her toe touched something. She stretched out her hand to feel what it was and found out that it was some sort of box.

It was the vanity box. The enamel design that was all around it and the touch of the coral that was like little round candies made her be sure of it.

"Thank goodness....., it must have been washed with us."

But, this wasn't the time to be relieved.

She needed to send these to the selkies who survived or they would remain in their human forms and won't be able to return to the sea.

And then, Lydia realized something else that worried her.

If the two selkies from just earlier were hoping for Lydia to save them and hence they brought her here.

"That's it, Edgar, if Ulysses wants to destroy this place, then he might be somewhere close to us...."

The sound of her voice bounced around in an echo but there was no reply from Edgar.

Why? She thought, but then all sorts of worse possible change of events came up in her mind, and sent Lydia into a panic.

Like that maybe Ulysses had come and captured him, or there was a hole that he fell into. Or maybe, if the one who Lydia had been talking to just now wasn't

Edgar.

“Edgar, hey, Edgar, where are you?”

Lydia bellowed out from suddenly becoming terrified. She hugged the box and walked along the wall.

She froze her steps because she felt a presence nearby that stepped on a pebble.

Right in front of Lydia who held her breath, the presence stopped walking.

“I found you, Lydia.”

“A-are you really Edgar?”

“Shall I say our secret word?”

We never decided on such a thing.

“I love you, my fairy.”

It’s him.

He’s fooling around, she thought irritatingly, but as soon as she understood that he was here, Lydia felt like she was going to cry.

“What is the matter? Did I surprise you?”

“Wh-why didn’t you give me a reply.”

“Because I wanted to concentrate on tracking your voice. If I opened my mouth, then I would lose the direction I worked so hard to grasp.”

She was revealed but she wanted to cry. Voice wasn’t enough. She wanted to make sure with her whole self if it was the real him who said with his words that he would stay by her side.

Lydia pushed those feelings aside and stepped back, then slump down weakly to sit on the floor.

“Lydia?”

“.....Please, don’t get near me right now.”

“Right now, as in?”

“I felt so helpless.”

Lydia’s mind was so chaotic and lost that she couldn’t believe it herself at what she was saying.

“Uh-hm.”

“That’s why, right now, I think I’m acting strange. Maggie isn’t inside me

anymore, but I feel that I might make an improper behavior.”

“Ohh, if it was that, then you’re welcome to fling your arms around me.”

“NO.”

“You don’t have to refuse with all your strength.”

She even thought herself that she was making a sour and cynical attitude.

This isn’t the likeable behavior of a young woman.

Just like Maggie, if it was a girl who could cuddle up when she wanted to, then anyone would see her as adorable.

And while the two of them would be spending a close time with each other, then their feelings of love just might grow bigger.

Then, it was naturally that Edgar didn’t fall in love with Lydia who was always refusing him.

It was a silly story for her to want him to just be serious even though she herself wasn’t trying to fall for him like Maggie.

Being in this kind of condition, there was no way that they could become lovers. But, she just couldn’t suddenly be like Maggie.

“Oh, but, I know that that kind of behavior doesn’t fit someone like me.”

His hand touched her shoulder. Then it traced down her arm gently and held her hand.

“It doesn’t matter if it fits or not.”

“That doesn’t matter now, let go.”

“Just for now. It’s not like you loath this?”

When she was asked that, she really didn’t mind it that much. Edgar was only resting Lydia’s fingers in his palm.

In the end, Lydia fell silent.

He kept his hand on hers and suddenly opened his mouth.

“This isn’t bad. I can’t see anything, but I can strongly feel that you are right here with me.”

Even though she said to let go, she was showing a completely vulnerable opening. She had the faint feeling that he anticipated that she couldn’t refuse and deliberately took his chances, which left her filled with confusion.

He was a person who made sure to find an opening in her guard and sneak

through it. She watched how he was seducing Maggie and found that out, but when it turned to her as his target, she didn't know what to do.

"Since our eyes are useless, don't you feel like our other senses have gotten stronger?"

".....Y-you think?"

"I can tell what kind of expression you have on your face. From the tension in your fingers, and from your voice, and from how you breathe," he explained.

A presence unseen to the eye; just by that, Lydia had the same feeling like she knew how close he was to her.

It was a pretty bad kind of closeness. If it was a normal situation, she might be already making a run. But using the excuse that she couldn't see, she remained in that spot.

Probably because the tip of her hand was the only thing that was touching, so she didn't feel any danger.

As she tried to convince herself that, she also knew that that was wrong.

Like he was trying to warm her finger tips that had become cold from fear, he rested the palm of his hand gently on hers. Her fingers that were strangely stiff loosened their tightness.

Her nerves were relaxed and in the moment that her body let out the tension in her back, his delicate but strong fingers sneaked themselves over to her.

When he locked his hand with hers tightly, it made her want to cry again.

"I said to not get near me."

She stayed in the same position and didn't shake away his hand, so it was wasn't convincing even if she said that.

"It isn't improper if you relied on your fiancé."

"But you aren't my fiancé."

"As long as you would allow me a kiss, then I'll be able to convince you so quickly that I'm your fiancé."

"If it was an easy thing like that, then you would have an endless long line of fiancées."

"You don't hate me, do you? When we hold each other's hand like this and you feel comfort in that, then you just need to wish further that you want to feel

even more comfortable.”

“Because you say such a thing, I have the thought that I might be a floozy girl.”

Words that should have remained inside her came slipping out of her mouth.

“So, that means you also want to kiss....”

“I don’t! That was a lie just now!”

“If you were floozy with me only, then I’ll gladly welcome it.”

Lydia didn’t know how she should continue talking.

Maybe it wasn’t something that she had to be standing on her guard about.

Even in the town of her childhood, the girls who were the same age as her were talking amongst themselves about how they spent time with their lovers.

But, Lydia didn’t feel that it was floozy at all and was secretly envious of them.

However, that was only if a woman were to have someone she loved from the bottom of her heart. If they were talking about how they were fooling around, she couldn’t have possibly sympathized with them.

That’s why right now, she might have felt like she was doing an improper thing because there was no heart in-between them.

Hers, and even Edgar’s feelings were too distant that they couldn’t possibly overlap.

“I can’t. It’s not like I don’t want to right now, but I, I think that I’ll come to regret this.I’m sure I’m going to regret it later.”

“There’s nothing to regret....” he said but stopped himself like he was undecided.

After a moment like he was thinking, she heard his whisper of ‘It’s my loss.’ She felt the air move around her with a hint of a faint confusion and surrender.

She could tell that Edgar slowly stood up. Their hands that were connected remained together, and he pulled her arm up.

“Shall we go then.”

“Where to?”

“From the spot I was just at earlier, I was able to see faint glow in the distance. At any rate, we need to find out what our situation is.”

They headed to the glowing light by finding the way there with their hands.

Eventually, in the place from beyond that, they were able to tell that there was

an open space that was lit up. There were rustling and bustling movements. It was definite that someone was there.

Edgar and Lydia slowly and quietly crept up to it and peered around from a tall and wide stone pillar. That space was filled with a number of lit candles, which made the space look like it was an underground catacomb.

The selkies who had their coats taken away by Ulysses were gathered in the center.

When Lydia saw that the old woman who had rescued her was also there, and that she was laying on the ground in an awful state, like she had been tortured with a whip, Lydia didn't think but ran out to them.

She didn't notice that Edgar didn't have time to react to hold her back as he worried that Ulysses might be somewhere near.

"Madam, oh, why did this happen. Ohh....., it's my fault. It's because Ulysses found out that you had let me escape."

".....Fairy doctor, you're alive....."

"Everyone, you all have to hurry and get out of here...."

As she said that looking around at them, she saw that there was a rope laid out of the ground in a circle around the group of selkies.

The rope had mistletoe embedded into it, so it was a magical barrier that sealed in the fairies.

Ulysses must have gathered the selkies who had escaped from the fire and chained them here. The two selkies from earlier must have wanted to let Lydia know about this.

"Hold on just a moment, I'll break this seal right away."

Lydia tried to untie the tied knot of the rope. But it was tied too strongly and she had a hard time.

"Can we not cut it?"

"But, there isn't any scissors here."

While Lydia was replying, Edgar cut the rope with a knife.

"Oh...., thank you."

"You're welcome."

She wondered if he thought she was a little stupid fairy doctor.

Lydia refocused herself, and she turned to face the selkies who were slowly easing their way out from inside the rope.

“Your coats are here. Go ahead and take yours.”

She opened the lid of the box in front of them as they erupted in a happily loud commotion.

The selkies didn't fight for who went first as each one of them took out one clear blue ball one at a time. The old woman too, as she was supported by one of her kind took hers and held it dearly in her hands.

When the box became empty, Lydia realized something.

“Ermine's is not here.”

There was so sign of any coats left. Which means, oh, no, it might have burned....

“Her coat is in the hands of Ulysses,” said the old woman.

“What, so she's alive then. Thank goodness.....”

She relaxed in relief and looked over to Edgar, but he had on a troubled expression. She was alive, but that meant she was still in the grasp of Ulysses.

From his place, he moved over in an unnatural way to stand behind Lydia. And he suddenly said:

“Lydia, don't turn around.”

Huh? She turned around without thinking.

At the same time, a pillar that had something bloody tied to it jumped into her eyes.

Edgar steadied her as she was able to fall over and hid the pillar away from her sight, but what she saw was burned into her mind.

“Wh.....what?”

“Most likely, Sir Stanley and Sir Clark.”

“Ar-are they dead?”

“No more than they could be.”

“But I'm going to have everyone die anyways,” interrupted a chilling voice that echoed around them.

When she looked around, she saw that Ulysses came walking slowly down on the stone stairways that was located in the back of the space.

“Those two were sacrifices. I wanted to taint this place as much as I could.”

The ones he brought with him were the two selkies from earlier and Ermine. And he had a pistol pointed to the back of Ermine.

“But I have to say, did I ever give the order to bring the two of them here?” he glared over to the two selkies. And then he looked over to Edgar.

“Lord, if this woman didn’t have an injury, then I wanted to have her fight you one more time, but that looks impossible.”

She indeed looked to be barely able to stand on her feet.

“Then why don’t you let her go. You should be satisfied with directly confronting me.”

“Personally, I do have the wish to do that. But I do have to complete the more important order that I was given, so I can’t let my feelings get the best of me,” said Ulysses in a suggestive manner as he pulled Ermine closer to himself.

“She only the use of being killed right in front of your eyes.”

When Ulysses stopped in the middle of the stairway, he made Ermine grip the pistol.

“Now, you at least to shoot yourself, can’t you?”

Ermine silently followed his wish and turned to point the gun at herself.

“What do you think you’re doing, you coward!” yelled Lydia, but it didn’t seem to hurt or even scratch Ulysses.

In that moment, Ermine turned her body around. She didn’t have her usual speed and grace, but it was plenty to wrap her arms around Ulysses all the way onto his back and pointed the gun to his neck.

“You, you shouldn’t be able to go against me...”

That was true. So why?

“Just like you ordered, I shall pull this trigger. It will go through your throat and into mine....”

Before she finished what she was saying, she leaned her head over towards Ulysses like she was going to kiss his neck and was about to pull the trigger.

“Raven, stop her!”

In that second, a shadow jumped down from above.

The sound of gunfire echoed against the walls and it was so loud that it hurt to

listen.

Ermine slumped down onto the stairs like she was sitting down. However, Ulysses remained standing as he had just stopped Raven's knife with his saber. If Ulysses was alive, then the bullet shouldn't have grazed Ermine either. But, even so there wasn't a second to relax.

The selkies that had to protect Ulysses jumped to attack Raven from behind. In the moment Raven leaped back, Ulysses attempted to escape.

Edgar ran up the stairs as he yelled "Take the gem that's on his ear!"

Raven kicked away the selkies and turned over to Ulysses and threw his knife. That sliced Ulysses' ear. The small gemstone shined as it fell to the ground. It had the faint blue color of the ocean. Was that an aquamarine?

Lydia remembered about the pendant that was hanging around her neck. It was an aquamarine that was passed down from her mother, and her mother from her grandmother, and from all the past generations. She heard that there were many people in her mother's relatives that became fairy doctors.

The one that was in Lydia's possession right now, could also be....

It was a little too late for Lydia to realize that she needed to pick up the gemstone that Ulysses dropped at the foot of the stairs.

If a piece of a human ear wasn't attached to it, she thought she wouldn't have hesitated, but Ulysses came down in one jump a second before Lydia who ran over to get it and picked it up into his hand.

She stopped her run right before she was nearly going to crash into him, but Ulysses gave her a grin and grabbed Lydia's arm.

"Lydia!"

She could sense that Edgar was coming after them, but Ulysses pulled Lydia's arm and dash to escape into the dark, depths of the underground cave.

Like he was used to it, Ulysses was able to get out of the maze-like place.

When they went up the stairs, they were on top of the hill.

Under the cloud-filled gray sky, they could hear the rumbling sound of the rough waves. It seemed like the selkies' rath had become even deeper and the waves were so violent and rough that they were splashing up close to the top of the hill they were on, making the air around them filled with drizzling rain.

Right in the middle of the top of that hill, there was a pile of firework that was lit and was burning a large fire.

“Take a look,” said Ulysses who dragged Lydia near the fire so that they came to a place where they could look out over the ocean around them. He didn’t look like he cared about his ear that had a portion cut off and still made blood oozing down his cheek.

“If you consider yourself a fairy doctor, you can tell right? This is unstoppable now.”

“I’m not considering. I am a fairy doctor.”

Lydia glared at him as hard as she could.

“With just my will, I can wish for this island to be engulfed in the sea. Hah, hah, fun, I can’t wait.”

“Because it is Prince’s orders? Don’t you have pride as a fairy doctor? No, you’re not a fairy doctor at all. Fairy doctor’s are the friend of fairies. That’s why even though they are human, they are given the power that can open them up to their magic. ...I will not forgive you. I won’t let this turn out as you hoped!”

“You’re so energetic. But what is there that you can do? Just having the eyes that can see fairies, doesn’t make you useful at all.”

From one of his pockets, he took out a half-clear colored ball.

“This is the last one. You all grieve over yourselves for getting involved with him.”

Ulysses was about to throw in the selkie fur coat into the fire.

But then, Edgar came running up from behind him to stop him by slamming himself into the young man’s back.

As he fought and knocked Ulysses down, he tried to get the selkie coat. Then it fell out of Ulysses’ hand. But one of them rolled into the fire.

Right in front of Lydia’s eyes as she stood in a daze, Edgar striked down Ulysses and ran over to scatter and put out the burning firewood by kicking it with his foot.

From the still burning hot ashes, he scooped up the coat.

“Well, well, even if you go so far and try to rescue those fairies, there’s no point

in it, it isn't like you to put your efforts in something so useless," said Ulysses, in a stubborn attempt to be firm and self-assured as he got up onto his feet and whipped off the blood from his cut lip.

"I'm the Earl of the Fairy land. It's natural for me to protect the thing that my fairy doctor would protect."

"You make me laugh. No more does the Blue Knight Earl exist in England country. And there aren't any more decent fairy doctors. No matter what name you use, there is no power that can stop the selkies," he said and held out the aquamarine out to the sea.

"Now, come here. You selkies."

Lydia jumped around to look out towards the sea, and saw that the groups of selkies were starting to move.

The surface of the ocean rose up like a mountain. The first wave was coming towards them.

She had to do something.

Lydia repeated to herself that it was fine, her mother was by her side. And, Edgar, who acknowledged that she was a fairy doctor was by her side.

There aren't any decent fairy doctors. That may be true, but if this aquamarine was a selkie's heart, then right now, Lydia should have the same amount of power as Ulysses had.

But what if it was just an ordinary aquamarine? If so, then although it was a shame, everything would be over.

But still, Lydia mustered up as much courage as she had, and she gripped her mother's aquamarine and then held it out towards the sea.

"Listen, selkies! I am the fairy doctor of the Blue Knight Earl! Please do not destroy the earl's fortress. I swear by this 'heart' that I will accept all of your sorrows!"

"A heart....., why would a girl like you....?"

She was able to hear Ulysses' whisper.

But the wave kept on rolling towards them and instantly thundered up the hill. The bubbling water currents came towards her direction.

Lydia!"

Edgar held out his hand to her as he was hanging onto a tree. She struggled to reach her hand to take his, but Ulysses grabbed a fist-full of her hair. Without letting go, she slipped under the waters with him.

Pushed by the current, Lydia was sucked own into the water and struggled to kick herself up for air but saw that Ulysses was reaching over to take away her pendant.

No. I'd rather die than let you take it.

Lydia resisted as hard as she could.

But, I can't.... Just when she thought she was at her limit, something came up to them and slammed itself against Ulysses.

Selkie....?



And then she realized it. She could breathe even under water. She had slipped into the fairy realm.

That was a different world that was lay atop but separated from the ocean of the human world.

A number of selkies made Ulysses back down by circling around Lydia as they swan slowly in the water.

It was the selkies that Lydia protected their coats for.

The water was filled with light and the selkies' coats had air bubbles in them which made them reflect the ocean and make them have the same light blue color.

"Are you going against me, selkies."

"We no longer have a reason to obey you."

Said a selkie that had a particularly large build, and Lydia was able to tell with one glance that it was the old woman.

She was a short height when in human form, but perhaps because she lived a long life as a fairy, her natural form had a bold and magnificent presence.

"I have this 'heart' with me. I can inflict everlasting pain to all of your kind."

"She also has a 'heart.' There is also the new Blue Knight Earl. As one of our friends, she will shoulder our pain with us."

She gracefully swam through the water since she retrieved her coat and her injuries from when she was in human form had completely healed.

"That Blue Knight Earl isn't true heir," said Ulysses in a snarling laugh.

"No, he is real. He is the earl that the merrows accepted."

Lydia couldn't lose either.

(We thought that they had all disappeared. The Blue Knight Earl and the fairy doctors that were here and there in the old days and the humans who we had trusted.)

The voice came from the group that was swirling around them in the distance.

"This little chit doesn't have the power of a fairy doctor like they had in the past. Even if she had a heart with her, it isn't like she's able to save all of you. Don't make me laugh."

Calling me little chit, you look like a little boy yourself.

"If you go against me, there will be no hope for your kind!"

To Ulysses' strong tone of voice, the selkies had a nervous look, but in the end no one moved.

(The new Blue Knight Earl's fairy doctor.)

(Can the new Blue Knight Earl be trusted?)

Well, I wouldn't recommend doing it, she sort of thought.

"If you would trust me even just a little, then I would like to ask if your kind would not destroy the earl's charm that's on that island. Both the earl and I are your allies. Even if we don't have the power like they did in the past, we promise that."

(Fairy doctor, we selkies cannot exist without a human friend. We shall make you, who had put so much effort for our kind as our hope.)

At the same time, the heave of the sea stopped.

Ulysses made a tsk.

"Fairy fools, you will come to regret this."

With those last words, he disappeared.

She wondered if he had the power to back and forth between the fairy realm freely on his own. The selkies had angered that kind of person, but had called Lydia as their hope and friend.

(Fairy doctor, the earl's fortress has already gotten unpurified. We cannot guarantee if it has any strength left.)

(You must return now. Your guide has arrived.)

After they said that, the swarm of selkies created a cloud of bubbles in the water, and swam away from Lydia into the distance.

She saw Nico coming in her direction, and he must have been stubborn about walking on his hind legs, that he came trodding on them even in the water.

She was revealed that he came for her, but when she saw how he came in such an arrogant manner, it made her furious at the same time.

"Nico! How dare you abandon me all by myself!"

"I felt bad about that. You can see that's why I came to take you home."

The roads in the fairy realm weaved and winded so obscure that it wasn't rare for humans who happened to fall into them to remain lost and wandering through them forever.

She really wanted to say the bold thing that she could go back herself, but she thought that was probably impossible, so Lydia just mumbled

"Fine."

""Don't be so angry. I really was so starving that I could nearly die."

“I was more close to dying!”

“That was, oh, fine, when we get back, I’ll let you rub the fur on my belly.”

Huhh? That isn’t pleasing at all.

But, for Nico to say that as he fumbled with his necktie in an embarrassed way, it was his highest self-sacrificing method to soothe down Lydia’s anger.

Now that she remembered, when she was a young child, rubbing her cheek against Nico’s belly was one of her favorite things to do.

After her mother passed away and she was feeling lonely and crying, Nico would say oh, fine, then and let her borrow his belly.

But, it wasn’t like she was a child anymore.

She was nearly going to laugh, but she thought she still might be a child.

She couldn’t do anything on her own. But, if there was a fairy who supported her, and if there was some person by her side, then she could still continue working her hardest.

She had her hand pulled by Nico as they elevated upwards, she noticed that there was one particular selkie that remained with her.

It was that old woman selkie. And she handed a round ball that had the same color as water.

“This, is it perhaps Ermine’s?”

“That child does not have the mind set of a selkie yet. But some day, there might be a day when she gets back her coat and wishes to return to the sea. Until then, please take care of her.”

Lydia nodded with a serious face, and the old female selkie looked relieved and swam away.

At her feet, where the sea was so low and dark, the selkies gathered to swim in a circle.

For a blink of a moment, Lydia thought she saw that vanity box.

A small little selkie was carrying it as it played around in the swimming in the water.

Teresa, is that you?

Even if she didn’t have the memory when she was a human, if one’s precious

memories were to never disappear, then..

That was sure to be carved in the deepest part of one's soul.



In the town of Hastings, where the white beach spread out on against the sea, the peak of the summer that only lasted a few days passed by, and the number of the crowds of people started to dwindle and disappear.

The England summers were short, and go by in hardly any time at all. Even if the sun beamed down hard, when people started to feel that the sunset was coming down much faster than usual, it wasn't long till the orange colored light filled the sky with the season of autumn.

Lydia was alone, walking along the beach as she looked out into the sea.

After the fire of Mrs. Collins' country estate, the one stream of events ended with the disappearance of three people.

Ulysses must be alive, but he didn't show himself after that.

The wave of the selkies crumbled one part of the hill and she heard that there was no one left inside the remains of the building. The selkies said they didn't know if there was any power left in it, but that was something Lydia, and even Edgar, didn't know, and it remained unclear if the Blue Knight Earl's evil-repelling charm was protected.

But, for Ulysses, it must have come out as a failure, and Edgar seemed to think that that alone was worth something.

Mrs. Collins and Suzy went back to Manchester.

The madam still looked like her mind was still half-floating in a dream, but it seemed like she had accepted Lydia as a nice young miss who kind enough to spend time with her in place of her daughter. She didn't mention the name of Teresa, and she was showing the concern and consideration towards Suzy like a good guardian, so one could hope that she was slowly returning back to reality. In the end, the island, and the people who were on it, managed to not be swept away.

Of course, Lydia knew that she didn't manage that on her own.

She was helped out by so many others and because she was supported, she was able to win her chance.

And just being able to know that, she felt she had grown much more of a better fairy doctor.

“Lydia, here you were.”

Lydia noticed Edgar as he walked over towards her as he smiled happily, and she flinched in reflex.

When Edgar was in a good mood, you had to be careful. Even when he wasn’t you should be careful, but since he had a smile on himself, people couldn’t help but let their guard down, so it was extremely dangerous for Lydia.

“If you were going to go on a walk, then you could have let me know.”

“But, you were in the middle of something.”

She tried to say it as coldly as she could. When she came out of the hotel, she saw him flirting with some noblewoman.

“There isn’t any kind of business that is worth refusing your invitation,” he worked out an excuse without changing his smile.

What a good talker. Lydia was appalled as she kept on walking.

“Please don’t be so cold to me. During the three days you were missing, do you know how much I was worried? I was pacing up and down the beach day and night.”

That was, apparently true, as Raven had even been saying that. During the short amount of time according to her knowledge that Lydia was away and came back from the fairy realm, it seemed that in the human realm, three days had gone by.

“But, didn’t Nico tell you that it will be all right since he would be coming to take me back.”

“But I still couldn’t rest easy until I was able to see your face.”

Well, she did feel sorry about that part, and so Lydia slowed down her walking pace.

Edgar walked up next to her and naturally took the parasol out of Lydia’s hand. To be walking along side a man who had a woman’s day umbrella in his hand, completely looked like they were announcing that they were a pair of couples no matter how you looked at it.

But when she realized that, it was already too late, as she felt he wouldn’t give

back her umbrella no matter what and so she gave up.

“Did you make sure and keep Ermine’s with you?”

“I have it. If she got her hands on that, she would lost her memories of when she was a human and become a selkie completely, right?”

She decided that Edgar should be the one to manage the item that she was entrusted by the old woman. Since Edgar knew about Ermine more than anyone else.

“Although I don’t know if things will be all right like this,” she said.

“Let’s think about it slowly.”

More importantly, said Edgar with a grin.

“It’s such a quiet beach and we’re having such a nice mood, so why don’t we fold arms.”

“I don’t want to. If you want to do that, then why don’t you take a walk with that woman from earlier.”

“Just to let you know, when I would meet my female cousin-”

“Like that is highly possible.”

“-that’s the kind of light kiss I would give her.”

“Kiss? You kissed her?”

“Huh,that wasn’t why you were angry?”

“Unbelievable!”

Lydia snapped at him and returned to fast-walking again.

Blurting out the mistake himself, he rolled his eyes to the sky for an instant, but quickly pulled himself together and followed after her.

“Lydia, that’s because you wouldn’t allow it with you. Are you saying that I shouldn’t kiss for the rest of my life?”

“It wouldn’t kill you if you didn’t!”

“It might kill me.”

If it was a man like you, yes. She couldn’t deny the possibility. But even so, he was unbelievable.

“Go and do whatever you please.”

That’s right, this isn’t something that I should be angry about. But, it still made her irritated.

"I'm starting to lose confidence," he murmured in a way like he was depressed.

"I'm not able to grab your heart, so I was beginning to feel like I didn't know what to do,"

Ohh, I can't let his act of pretending to be lonely fool me. Even as Lydia warned herself, she turned to look around just a bit.

"That's why I wanted to make sure,"

"A-about what."

"When it comes to the point of time, if I can properly kiss or not."

"Huh....? The point of time....?"

"When you would allow me."

I knew it, he was joking around.

"Oh, Lydia, let's walk more slowly. Since the sound of the waves and the blow of the wind feels so calm and peaceful."

"I'm enjoying taking a walk by myself."

She pointed her chin in the opposite direction of him.

"Oh, well, if it isn't Mr. Palmer."

Lydia noticed there was someone walking towards them from the other direction. The earl imposter, for some strange reason, acted so friendly by taking and shaking Edgar's hand.

"Why, good day, my lord," greeted Edgar, sarcastically.

"Oh, please don't poke fun at me. You are such a bad character. How could I have possibly guessed that you were the real Earl Ashenbert."

And then, suddenly he straightened himself from his loose attitude.

"Lord Earl, the reply from the London newspaper company came back, and thankfully, I was able to get my share of earnings. When I return back over there, I'll look for a good, proper job."

"That would be nice."

And then, he turned over to Lydia and made a pleasant smile.

"Teresa, oh, right, you weren't her. Miss. Lydia, from now on, there won't be anymore inconsiderate gossip articles written about the earl. Once it spreads out that he has someone special to his heart, then there won't be any more

insolent people who would use his name and fool around with women.”

Lydia had a bad feeling.

“.....Wait, now, Edgar, what is the meaning of this?”

“Palmer, don’t say such a needless thing.”

“Ohhh, forgive me. Well, if you would excuse me now.”

Palmer took his exit and quickly left.

“The word about someone special to your heart?”

“Just to explain, he was in some trouble with money, so I said it would be all right for him to talk to the press about us.”

Which means, they were sold to the gossip papers?

“Are you saying that he talked about me?”

“A romance about the Blue Knight Earl and a Fairy doctor. Isn’t it poetic? You say that the reason were aren’t rumored about is because we don’t suit each other, but now, thanks to this, it would make a proper rumor.”

Edgar had now taken a suddenly defiant, proud attitude.

“It will be next week when Professor Carlton would be coming back from Paris. Since the Londonpeople are quick to become bored, they would have forgotten about our rumor by then. We had made it so that the hired housekeeper at your house was told that you were taking a long outing, that’s why, we should spend some more time as just the two of us here. Wouldn’t you think it’s best that it’s best not to return to Londonright in the middle of a heated rumor?”

Lydia was now, so past the point of rage, then she could only slump her shoulders.

She was planning on making him agree to annulling their engagement, but now she felt like she had a even taller fence built around her.

But inside Lydia, the feelings of denial had become much weaker than how they were so strong and bent before.

She couldn’t picture herself in marriage. Of course, she couldn’t see Edgar as a fiancé. But he had something that Lydia didn’t have and he also replenished it to her. She was even beginning to feel like she wanted to get to know him better just a little bit.

But that could also be just a part of his anticipated plan.

“I really like the sea. It reminds me of my mother.”

Instead of making a reply, Lydia walked over to the waves that washed up to shore. The crest of the foamy waves, which soaked in a faint sepia color sort of appeared lonely as it washed and wrapped around her shadow.

“Lydia, you know how you said you didn’t wish it because you would only regret it....”

She wasn’t able to completely hear Edgar who said that in like a faint whisper a little distance away.

“Huh, did you say something?”

Edgar made a soft smile.

“At that time, I suddenly lost my confidence. I wasn’t able to say that I wouldn’t make you regret. If it were to help make you accept me, it wouldn’t be words or something like a kiss,I don’t know what it would be.”

His voice mixed with the sound of the waves. But his eyes that gazed at her, looked like they were in sorrow and longing for something, and it made Lydia unwillingly beat her heart.

“Hey, what is it?”

He twirled the day umbrella which was made with a transparent lace designed with small flower patterns on it, as he walked over to Lydia and he held out a faint pink shell to show her.

“How pretty. When did you have the time to find it?”

He handed it to her, and then, he took her hand in a little awkward way, like he was touching her for the very first time.

“Ahh, I can’t believe this is as much as I can do.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Nothing.”

He held her hand as he continued walking.

Still a little nervous, Lydia couldn’t deny herself in feeling comfort in doing what they were doing.

She didn’t dislike Edgar’s hand.

She felt a little guilt in feeling that.

I wonder if I should be doing such a thing while Father is away.

I'm sorry. But I have a feeling like Mother is smiling down at me.

The aquamarine she wore that dangled down onto her chest reflected the sunset light that was shined and soaked Lydia's cheek and appeared like it was shining with a faint orange glow.

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